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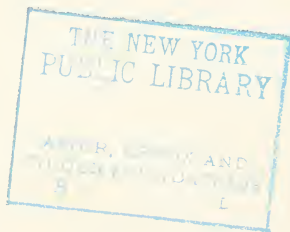
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HOME BOOKS.

BY COUSIN ALICE.



142

Haven



The Debating Society.—p 106.

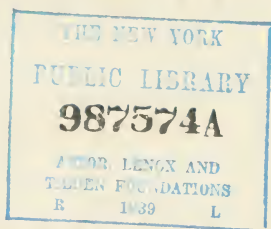
OUT OF DEBT,

OUT OF DANGER.

BY

COUSIN ALICE. *Spread of*
oc *Haven, Alice (Bradley)*

NEW YORK:
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY,
346 & 348 BROADWAY.
1853.



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THE SIXTH HOME BOOK.

"So it's not a 'Juvenile,' after all," some one said, who asked the title of the new home book.

"Not such very little juveniles as we *have* entertained in our study," said Cousin Alice. "School girls and boys."

"But boys and girls never get in debt," persisted our good little friend, who had never dreamed of such a thing in her day.

"There are more ways than one of getting in debt, I suppose you know," said Cousin Alice, going on with her bouquet, laying a tea rose beside the heliotrope in mignonette, for this conversation was in the little parlor of Locust Cottage. "And as for children, why, they may have the disposition, and show the lack of principle earlier than you think for."

“Great Oaks from little acorns grow,” said our friend, pleasantly.

“Precisely,” said Cousin Alice, “if you had taken the cankered branch from that Ami Vibert rose at first”—

“I should not have lost all my blossoms, I dare say; and so, Good-bye.”

“Good-bye, for the present only, I hope,” said

Cousin Alice.

LOCUST COTTAGE, AUG., 1855.

OUT OF DEBT, OUT OF DANGER.

CHAPTER I.

THE FAMILY GATHERING.

As one by one the cheerful group—
In order take their place,
Mamma beside the hissing urn,
Presides with gentle grace.

HOUSEHOLD BALLADS.

“WHAT a terrible noise those children have been making all the morning! I declare they are perfect little torments, it was impossible to sleep!”

“Oh, don’t be putting on airs, Joe,” returned master Tom Bleeker to this elegant and sisterly expression of feeling.

“No airs in the case,” retorted Miss Josephine, hugging her pretty little self in her scarlet sacque. “It’s a cold, uncomfortable morning,

if it is New-Year's Day ; and I should think you might poke that lump of coal, and let us have a little more fire. I don't believe there's a bit in the furnace ; my room's like a barn."

"Poke it yourself," said Tom again, not stirring an inch from his comfortable seat, his father's own especial lounging chair. "Girls always want so much waiting on !"

"What an affectionate pair !" somebody said in a very much amused tone. "Go on with the conversation, young people ; don't stop on my account, pray."

Tom sprang up, abashed, to offer the chair to his father, proving by the movement that he was the possessor of considerable agility, which was also shown in his tall, well-grown figure ; as manly a lad of fourteen as one could wish to see.

Both the children had a strong resemblance to their father, as he came and stood between them, on the hearth-rug. A gentlemanly, good-natured person he seemed, by no means old, and arrayed in a remarkably handsome dressing-gown, the tassel twirled in his white well shaped hands as he stood with his back to the fire.

"Go on," he said, again turning half way to Tom, as he patted Josephine on the shoulder.

"They have thought better of it," said an

equally pleasant voice, as a lady, Mrs Bleeker herself, came from the next room.

There was a reproof in the tone, though it was so kindly, which Mr. Bleeker's laughing cheek had not conveyed. Tom especially looked ashamed of himself, as he wished his mother good morning.

"Oh, it's New-Year's Day ; we must make allowances," said Mr. Bleeker, unfolding the Herald. "Steamer in, I see. Let them have their own way for once in their lives, poor things."

Mrs. Bleeker, as a good wife, did not care to argue the point before her children, but as a good mother she knew it was best never to lay aside wholesome restrictions. So she asked Tom to ring for breakfast, showing him that he was to make himself useful ; and commissioned Josephine to go to the nursery, and bring the children down, as they were all to come to the table that morning. It was an errand the young lady did not much fancy in her present mood ; and she did not receive the shout of "wish you *happy* New-Year ! wish you happy *New-Year* !" which greeted her entrance, quite as graciously as she might have done.

"You can all come to breakfast. There, don't

tear the house down, Peter ;—oh, my apron, *take care !* Kate ! don't hang on to me so."

"Won't you speak to Nannie, Miss Josephine ?" said the civil nurse-maid, holding up a bright, healthy-looking baby. "So it was *abused*, and shut up with its little lovely self, it was ; an' every body going down to papa. Kecher ! kecher ! kecher !" and the crowing, kicking baby was tossed towards her elder sister, with such a loving, bright little smile, that even Miss Josephine in the dignity of her thirteen years, and one term at boarding school, was beguiled into a little romp with her, and felt the better for it, as she went down stairs again.

The whole party in the dining-room were in the highest spirits, for besides New-Year's and breakfasting down stairs, which did not happen every day, they had caught glimpses of various packages and parcels arranged on the piano in the next room.

"Me next, Olly !" pleaded the shy Lucy, made bold for once in her life by the excitement of the moment.

The Bleekers were "a large family," as their friends often said, wondering Mrs. Bleeker kept her senses, with so many children about her. Lucy, holding up her birds-eye dinner apron,

was five years old ! Olly, who had just settled the boisterous Kate and noisy Peter, on impromptu high chairs manufactured of music books, was scarcely ten ; yet she was as motherly almost to the younger ones, as Mrs. Bleeker herself. Every body liked Olly, *Olive* by desert, yet she was not pretty, or clever, as Josephine had always been. Mr. Bleeker called her "Humpty-Dumpty," half the time, which she did not mind in the least, but rather liked ; as he never did so when not in good humor. Her square, stout little figure, in green merino dress, and black silk apron, was seen up stairs and down stairs, bustling about at every-body's service ; while Josephine rocked away, book in hand, perfectly oblivious of all but self-evident duties.

Mrs. Bleeker certainly needed her active little aide-de-camp, to keep the table in order. Mr. Bleeker, in high good humor, was for helping the children to every thing they wanted ; New-Year's day being the excuse again. It was Olive, who substituted hominy for the oysters that were passed to Kate, and dusted Peter's soft-boiled egg, with the *bottom* of the pepper-box. Lucy, afraid to urge her claims, would have gone hungry, in the midst of plenty, at

least long enough to get heart-broken, and so spoil it all when it did come, if Olive's quick gray eyes had not spied the empty plate and quivering lip.

Meantime Josephine eat on in undisturbed enjoyment, of fish, flesh, and fowl within her reach, only stopping to protect her scarlet sacque from the inroads of Peter's spoon on one side, and Kate's hominy and milk on the other.

For a while at least, no one attempted to quell the strife of tongues, so suddenly let loose, in the usually peaceful dining-room.

"Dear me, Katie, how *tipsy* you pass your plate," remarked Peter, having scraped the bottom of the egg glass, until it was almost as clean as when it came from the china closet.

"There ! all over my lap !" exclaimed the unfortunate Joe.

"Then you ought to have passed it for her !" responded Master Tom, who felt very virtuous himself that moment, buttering a second slice of bread for Lucy. "Lazy folks take the most pains ! dont they—I say, Lucy di Lammermoor."

"My name *isn't* Anna More," said the indignant little one, appealing to her mother, "is it, mamma ? My name is Lucy—Barnard—Bleeker.

"I'm five years old next March!" proceeded she, with rather more spirit than usual, confident that she knew this fact at least.

"Well done, little one," said Mr. Bleeker, leaning over Tom to the sugar bowl, and bowling a lump, by way of reward, down the table; which notice from her father so astonished Miss "Lucy Barnard," that she was hushed forthwith, and for the rest of the breakfast.

"What a pretty cap mamma's got on, Peter! Mamma, what makes you wear caps to breakfast? You don't wear them any other time."

"I know!" answered the urchin, before Mrs. Bleeker could offer any satisfactory explanation to Katie's inquiring mind.

"Well, why?" said Kate, in the most provokingly incredulous tone; as much as to inquire, "what do *boys* know about caps?"

"Because she'd take cold, leaving off her night-cap so suddenly!" shouted the young gentleman, his face growing very red, with the feeling that may-be he was not right after all, and every body would laugh at him.

"At our school," began Josephine, desiring to give her mother still further particulars of that wonderful place; but Tom's voice was loud-

er still, and "you ought to have seen us boys," was all Mrs. Bleeker could make out above the din.

"Peter had tongue twice!" remonstrated Kate.

"*You* don't need any at all," was Mr. Bleeker's answer, as he supplied the offered plate liberally.

"Well, Lucy has eaten all the butter off, and left the bread!"

"It's not Lucy's bread at all. Stop, Tom; she doesn't get butter," said Olive, with authority.

"She shall, if she wants it, to-day at any rate." Mr. Bleeker sent a slice to the sober little thing, that had been buttered to suit himself.

"Please not, papa," urged Mrs. Bleeker, at this new breach of nursery discipline.

"Oh, do let the children enjoy themselves."

"Not at the expense of a sick day to-morrow," said Mrs. Bleeker, pleasantly. "No, my pet, butter does not agree with Lucy, don't you recollect?"

"Mamma, can I have a cup of coffee, just this once?" asked Peter, emboldened by his father's remark, and not stopping to notice the prohibitory law enforced. But Mrs. Bleeker had come to the conclusion that every body had about

breakfast enough, and rang to have it removed accordingly.

“Hurrah! now for the things!” shouted Peter.

“I hope and *trust*,” said Katie, famous for her use of grown-up words and phrases, “that I shall get a fur tippet.”

“I want a watch!” said the aspiring Peter. “Tom, have you got a watch?”

“No, indeed, I wish I had! all the boys have watches. What have you set your heart upon, Joe?”

“Lots of things—a gold pencil for one, and a new journal, a silk apron, or a bracelet; Clementina had a splendid one on her birthday. I should think I might begin to wear jewelry now. There come the doors open. Oh what quantities of parcels! How you do tear about, children!”

“Number one!” called out Mr. Bleeker, from the piano, and handing a very significant box to Master Tom, at the same time.

“Number two!” and Josephine’s eager hands received a similar mysterious pasteboard enclosure, while Mrs. Bleeker added her offering.

No one was forgotten, not even Eliza, the good-natured nurse, who had brought the crow-

ing, happy baby, for her present,—and Susan, the cook, wiping her hands on her apron, though they were clean as hands could be, before she took the new mousseline de laine dress that fell to her share.

Peter sprang a huge watchman's rattle, and blew a pretty good blast on a miniature bugle at the same time. Katie held up her apron for more, incredulous that such a big pile of things could be disposed of in so short a time.

“And, mamma,—what did you get, mamma?” asked Olly, more than satisfied with her own share, and finding time to exclaim with all the rest over theirs.

“Let us see, first, what mamma has for me,” said Mr. Bleeker, pausing with his hand on the very last package, and his face quite radiant with thinking of the great surprise and pleasure in store for his wife. “Sensible to the last degree! Only look, Joe, what a gift for a woman of taste like your mother; half a dozen handkerchiefs.”

“But she hemmed them beautifully, her own self; she would not even let me touch them,” said Olive, feeling very much aggrieved that her mother's gift, which had taken all her leisure moments for a week, was not properly

appreciated. "And see, papa's name in the corner ; we marked them last night, didn't we, mamma. I mean I brought the hot iron, and held the ink."

"They are very nice indeed, really very fine," said her papa, in answer to this eager appeal. "Mamma's stitches are always nicely set. I shall have to wear one to-day, and she must wear my gift too.—There, my dear, what do you think of that?" and he threw over her shoulders a rich India scarf, as she received his proffered kiss of acknowledgment for the handkerchiefs. Certainly there was a wide difference between the two gifts.

It may have been that thought which flushed Mrs. Bleeker's face, as she unconsciously gathered the rich scarf into graceful folds. Josephine, who began even thus early to understand the value of a cashmere, wondered that her mother received so costly a gift so quietly. Her father was piqued as he noticed it, and said, as if hurt by his wife's coldness,

"Doesn't it please you, Ellen?"

"It is very, *exquisitely* beautiful," — she could not conceal a little womanly pride in the possession of a *real* India scarf,—“but —”

"Oh, no 'buts,'" interrupted Mr. Bleeker,

quickly. "If you like it, wear it—that's all; if not, I dare say Stewart will take it back again."

His tone was very different from the good-natured bantering he had used all the morning, and Josephine thought "father had a right to be cross," as she kissed him very affectionately for her long-coveted gold pencil.

A little shadow—it did not seem as if it had never been there before—came over Mrs. Bleeker's face; but she only folded the scarf very exactly in its original folds, and returned it to the curious silken box in which it had come. Olive, standing nearest to her, heard a little sigh, but she spoke just as pleasantly a moment after. No one seemed to remember it, but Olive afterwards saw her mother go up to their papa, standing then with his back to the fire-place, and placing her hand on his shoulder, look up into his eyes a minute as she sometimes looked into hers when she had been doing wrong. Olive would rather she would scold any time.

"You *know* what I mean," her mamma said, very quietly.

"I know you are the dearest and best wife in the world," he said, kissing her cheek; and Olive, who had felt her newly-acquired gray

squirrel muff as nothing in the balance of her mother's unhappiness, stole away quite relieved, and coaxed the children back to the nursery, pretending that she was "little boy blue"—and they her sheep, as she sounded Peter's bugle behind them.

"I've a great mind to take 'Tom with me," said Mr. Bleeker, as he tied his neckhandkerchief in an elegant bow, an hour after. "Tom! where are you, Tom?—here, I propose being bothered with you this morning."

"To make calls?—O, please do, papa; there's my new cap and coat, you know."

"Tom is a true Bleeker," said his father again, as the boy darted away to refresh his toilette. How do you like this vest, my dear? Mr. Bleeker's New-Year's present to himself. St. Leger considers it one of the handsomest he has made up this year."

"It is in perfect taste,"—and Mrs. Bleeker dashed one of the new handkerchiefs with the faintest possible touch of Jean Marie's Cologne, from a quaint flask, proclaiming it to be genuine. "And you have a new cane, too, I see."

"Yes,—isn't *that* worth having! I forgot to show it to you. The handle is carved from a solid agate. I told St. Leger I did not need

it, and he would have to wait for his money, but he insisted on my having it. Where are my gloves—a fresh pair of Alexandres, if you please, Kate. Now look your prettiest ; your dress will suit you, I hope. Where's Tom ? ”

“ Tom ! ” shouted Mr. Bleeker on the stairs, and “ Tom ! ” called Josephine twice, at the door of his room, before the young gentleman made his appearance, assuming his jauntiest air, and pulling out the tip of his handkerchief in relief upon his dark coat, as he had seen his father do.

“ Here comes the young coxcomb ! Make my compliments to your visitors, Ellen ; ”—and Tom followed his father into the handsome sleigh awaiting them at the door.

CHAPTER II.

NEW-YEAR'S DAY.

"And girls, nowadays, imagine themselves women before they leave the school-room."

JOSEPHINE thought her mother needlessly strict, because she would not allow her to sit in the parlor, and see company. "If Tom could go out with his father, she did not see why she was not old enough to be down stairs. There was not such a great difference in their ages!"

She hung about the borders of the "Enchanted Ground" all the morning, restless and discontented. She could not set herself steadily about any thing.

First she watched her mother dress, examining, and remarking upon every article.

"Oh, what a pretty handkerchief, mamma? Did I ever see it before? Why don't you put your hair into a French twist; I'm sure I could

do it for you if you would let me? Won't you put on but one bracelet? I'm sure if I had three bracelets I should wear them all. Is this grandmother's hair, or aunt Lucy's? Did you have a gold pencil when you were a little girl, mamma?"—until Mrs. Bleeker, dressing in haste, was obliged to say—"My dear child—you are disarranging every thing—you really must let my things alone, or I shall have to send you out of the room."

So she amused herself at the window a little while, until she saw her mother take a silk dress from the wardrobe, and lay it across a chair in readiness.

"Why, mamma! I thought you were going to have a new dress to wear to-day? I am sure papa said 'your new dress,'—and I have seen *that* a hundred times."

"Not quite; what is the fault with it, Josephine? It is fresh, and a color that your papa likes,—and by no means old-fashioned."

"Well, I'm sure papa said a new one. It's pretty enough—and then, there's the scarf. May I get it out, mamma?"

"Stop, stop,"—Mrs. Bleeker was obliged to say more quickly than she generally allowed herself to speak, for Josephine, pulling up the box

cover, would have had it unfolded in another second. "I'm not going to wear it; and it is very difficult to get it back in the same folds. I should not have time for it now."

"Not wear papa's present! when it's so lovely too! Oh, please let me show you how nice it will look over that gray silk—mayn't I? please."

"There's a ring,"—said Mrs. Bleeker, to Eliza, who was chambermaid as well as nurse. "See that Ann is dressed to go to the door,"—and the box was put on to an upper shelf in the wardrobe, and Mrs. Bleeker hurried down stairs without more ado.

"Mamma is so cross, and unaccountable," thought the discomfited Josephine, thus left to Eliza's society; "I think papa is a great deal the nicest. I'm glad I'm not Olly, to have to tend the baby while Eliza makes the beds. Well, here's a splendid chance to try and do my hair as I saw that fashion plate, hand-glass and all;"—so Josephine brought brushes, and hair pins, and spent an hour very industriously in trying to dress her hair after a French fashion plate.

Of course she did not succeed, not understanding the secret of securing it firmly, and

the heavy braids would tumble down, until she lost her temper, and tossed the hand-glass on the bed, obliged to be content with the old way after all.

By this time the street was filled with carriages and sleighs, and gentlemen on foot, all very eager, and in a great hurry, getting in each other's way, and consulting visiting lists, as they ran up the steps of the opposite houses, and pulled the bells, or ran down and off again as if they had more to accomplish than they knew how to get through with.

Every time their own bell rang, Josephine flew to the stairs, and leaned over the banisters, so that it was a wonder that she had not broken her neck before the morning was over. Sometimes she saw gentlemen pulling up their gloves, and settling their collars before the little glass in the hat stand, or Ann passing through the hall with a fresh supply of cake in the silver basket, or clean cups on a tray,—and at noon a plate was sent up to each of them, Olive and Josephine, with a selection from the lunch table in the back parlor, at which all the visitors were invited to help themselves.

Josephine called Olive, and helped her in the

most patronizing way, to one of these well-filled plates.

“And there’s nuts, and raisins to come, Ann says. So we’ll settle ourselves at the window, so that we can eat and talk, and watch the people at the same time. This is very nice cold turkey ; I like the white meat, don’t you ?”

“No, I believe I like a drumstick as well as any thing,—and I *admire* ham sandwich. Have you got one ? How nice it must be to pay calls on New-Year’s day, and be able to help yourself every where. But I don’t know but that it’s nicer after all to stay at home, with a whole table full of things. I wonder if mamma eats a little bit between every call ? Have you been down, Josephine ?”

“No,”—said her sister discontentedly. “I should think I might, though. Mother’s *so* particular ! Clementina Jones sees calls, and has ever since she can remember. She says all the gentlemen notice her, and praise her. I wish you could see her, Olly. She’s perfectly lovely !”

“Has she got long ringlets all round ?” inquired Olive, pausing from her vigorous attack on the drumstick, “with large blue eyes ?”

To Olive’s unsophisticated taste, her great wax doll was still the type of perfect beauty.

“Why no—not exactly, she papers it sometimes, and then her nose—I tell you, as a great secret, Olive, her nose *does* turn up. But she has such elegant dresses, and lots of pocket money, and plays so splendidly, better than some of the real old girls. Miss Anthon always calls on her when there’s company, and we are *devoted* friends.”

“Oh!” said Olive, simply. “The plate did not hold so much, did it, after all? Here comes the nuts though. Who else do you like, Joe?”

“Why there’s Miss Fanshaw. She’s one of the *real old* girls, in the fourth year, but I love her dearly, she’s so amiable. Why she must be all of sixteen, I should say.”

“How *very* old,” said Olive, “quite grown up. I do believe this is a Philœpena! Can you hear it rattle, Joe? I mean to ask Tom to eat it with me, that is, if you don’t mind. I suppose she’s the best scholar.”

“Oh no, she isn’t! Ann Brown’s the best scholar. Isn’t it an ugly name! and she’s *as plain*—as—oh, as any thing you ever saw. And only think, Olive—she sweeps the school-rooms, and halls, to pay her bills! Did you ever hear any thing like that! Clementina never speaks

to her, and says she shouldn't wonder if her father took her away when he comes to know it."

"Well, I like to sweep, may-be she does."

"Oh, you don't understand! We have to sweep our own rooms, which is very mean, I must say, but we leave the dust all at the door, and Ann has to see to it. No, she's *poor*,—child! and has to work for her living. She's going to be a teacher. Give me two or three raisins just to finish my nuts, that's a good girl; I don't think I had quite as many as you to begin with."

The little girls were still for a few minutes, searching industriously among the empty shells to see if they could not find one that had been passed over. Josephine was successful, and broke out again presently with,

"Don't you think mamma is dreadfully strict, Olive? I like papa a great deal the best."

"Why," said Olive bluntly, "*no*, I don't."

"He does not see every little thing, and hear every little word so. And then he makes such elegant presents, and mamma such little ones. Just think! only a needle-book!"

"Let me tell you, sister," said Olive in eager

vindication, "mother has hardly been out of the house for a month, getting our New-Year's presents ready. I'm sure you wrote home that you'd lost your needle-book, and I should have made you one, but I could not sew nice enough."

"When papa came at examination," continued Josephine, "every body admired him so much. I wish you could see Clementina's father! He's *nothing* to compare with ours! He laughs so loud, and he chucks the girls under their chins! Every body said he was so good-natured and amiable. Papa I mean, not Mr. Jones."

"Well," said Olive, smoothing the few remaining shells out of her apron, and rising reluctantly, "I suppose I must go and see to the children, while Eliza gets her dinner. I wish you would come too."

"Oh, don't ask me. No, I can't. It's so 'poky,' up in the nursery, and Peter and Kate make such a racket." I want to finish 'Langley Dale.' Did I ever tell you about our dialogues in any of my letters? No, I didn't, I believe. Well put me in mind to-night," and Josephine settled herself on the lounge with her new book, while overhead Olive taxed her invention to keep the riotous children in order.

Mrs. Blecker had a great many calls that

day, for her husband was fond of society, and liked to have her keep up a large circle of acquaintances. There was not much variety in the conversation, it is true,—old Mr. Gleason's visit seemed as an example for all.

First, he said, "it was very cold," then, that "it was very bright overhead;" then that he had met Mr. Bleeker and Tom, who were looking *remarkably* well. Then he took up his hat, and laid it down to take a cup of coffee from Ann's tray, which he held about half a minute, and set down on the mantel-piece without tasting. After which he took up his hat again, and said, "Mrs. Bleeker was looking very well; what a fine old Knickerbocker custom this was, of making New-Year's calls," and "it was getting late" as he bowed himself out of the parlor.

Mrs. Bleeker left alone, walked to the window, and saw him helped into his sleigh, and almost covered with Buffalo robes by the black driver. She wondered, as she stood there, whether it was such a fine old custom after all, paying New-Year's calls. She knew that many people had been going about all day, drinking much more wine than was good for them, and others were spending much more money than

they could afford, on their dress, and the refreshment table.

“And how many gay compliments have been paid and listened to, with a heavy heart, if the truth was known,” she said to herself, as she noticed the short winter’s day was already closing in.

The shadow of the morning came back to Mrs. Bleeker’s smooth, open brow. But what could *she* have to make her unhappy? Up stairs her healthful merry children were playing, —around her was every comfort, and many luxuries. The pictures, the statuettes, the “wonderful nothings,” with which the mantel and bookcases were strewn, had been especial gifts to her from an affectionate, indulgent husband. More than one lady welcoming the gay, handsome Mr. Bleeker, as a guest, had called her an enviable woman, that very day.

You could see that she had been beautiful, as she leaned against the curtain, its color sending an unwonted glow over her cheek, but her eyes and brow seen in the wintry twilight, had a careworn, troubled look, as of some ever present anxiety.

But there were quick steps in the hall, Tom unceremoniously brushing past his father, and

Mr. Bleeker coming in hat in hand, with great mock decorum and seriousness to make a formal call. The little ones privileged again, rushed down in a body to tea, and a gay evening ended the first day of the good year 1850.

CHAPTER III.

THE BESETTING SIN.

This is the rat that eat the malt that lay in the house that Jack built.

"Debt, however cautiously it be offered, is the cup of a siren, and the wine, spiced and delicious though it be—an eating poison."

DOUGLAS JERROLD.

"You don't care for company," said Mr. Bleeker, kicking off his boots on the hearth rug, and calling Ann to come and take them away. He had been proposing a supper party to his wife, of only a few friends. Mrs. Bleeker did not seem to fancy it.

"Yes, sometimes ; but there will be a great deal to do on Thursday, getting the children off to school again ; and if we hire a waiter,—"

"What's that !" interrupted Mr. Bleeker, catching sight of a yellow envelope on the mantel piece, tucked between the tea bell and the clock, as if it was to be mailed, or had just arrived. "Who have you had a letter from ? Two of them, are they ?"

Mrs. Bleeker went on with her sewing. She knew the storm would come soon enough, and she did not wish to hasten it. She had been looking forward to it in a kind of nervous trepidation all day, and now her heart beat very fast, and her hand shook, though she was only too well accustomed to such things.

Her husband tore off the wrappers, and unfolded the enclosures in ominous silence.

"Blake! well I must say he's in a hurry for his money. This is only the 4th. What have we had there lately, Kate? I did not know we owed him any thing."

"You forget the new tea set."

"Yes, and half of it's broken by this time, I dare say. You have the most careless servants about this house, that I ever saw. 'Half a dozen goblets,'—why, we had two dozen only last year!—'one decanter, two fruit-dishes!' What do you think the sum total is?" and he dashed his hand upon the mantel violently.

"I have no idea," said Mrs. Bleeker, gently. "You sent nearly every thing home yourself, Richard. Those goblets are the Bohemians you took a fancy to, I suppose."

"Oh, yes, it's always *me!*" retorted her husband. Where was the elegant, the amiable

Mr. Bleeker, now? "I suppose this bill of Stewart's is all my making. Two hundred and seventy-five dollars, thirty-nine cents! I hope he may see it to-morrow! Bills, bills, bills, for a month now! That's all the good one gets of New-Years; nothing *but* bills!"

"It would have been twenty dollars more, if I had bought the dress you wished me to have for New-Year's day. I have tried to be very economical this winter. I had no idea the amount was so great. May I take it a moment? There may be some mistake."

He tossed it over his shoulder into her lap without turning round, and crossed his arms moodily behind him.

It was as he had said, but the items explained it all.

"One Honiton cape, \$18." Mr. Bleeker had given it to her on her birthday.

"One cashmere scarf, \$75."

The bill was folded, and restored to its envelope without a word.

"There's a dozen or more yet to come, I suppose," said Mr. Bleeker, presently.

"There's Mr. Cook the grocer, and Brook's shoe bill, and St. Leger."

"That's *my* business," growled Mr. Bleeker.
"Who else?"

"I can't tell, exactly, but there are always more or less dropping in, that one has forgotten, besides the regular house bills."

"Oh, that you may be sure of, and larger than you expect, always." Mr. Bleeker snatched up the poker, and dealt a vigorous blow to a great black lump of Liverpool coal, which appeared as if aimed at some of his annoying creditors.

"That is true," Mrs. Bleeker said in a firm, quiet tone, as if it was best to look on the worst at once. "We should do without a great many little things if we had to pay the money at once, but it's so easy to get a thing charged."

"I don't care about being lectured to-night, Mrs. Bleeker."

"*Dear Richard!*"

"When were the girls paid?" said Mr. Bleeker, after an ugly pause, while two misty tears had sprung to the eyes bent over little Kate's new dress, which were not allowed to fall however, but had to content themselves with returning to their hiding-place, sent by Mrs. Bleeker's resolve to bear this expected trial, in all patience and gentleness.

"We owe the cook, and Ann, for three months; I gave Eliza a month's wages, not long ago, so she has but twelve dollars to get."

“Three times eight. Twenty-four dollars to the cook. Twenty-one to Ann, and twelve did you say?—there’s fifty-seven to start with!”

Yet only the night before, when Mr. Bleeker had found his wife wearied out with her many cares, he had proposed having a regular chambermaid and seamstress; quite insisted upon it, because he wanted to read to her, and she had the children to put to sleep.

“O, Richard!” said his wife, suddenly rising, and laying her hand on his shoulder, as she often did when he seemed hurt and offended, “must we *always* go on so?”

“I don’t know how to help it,” he answered, gloomily. “It gets worse and worse, every year; there are bills over from last July.”

“If you could only make me a regular allowance for the house and the children, I could manage much more economically. I’m sure I could.”

“That’s all very well to *talk* about, Kate, but where is the money to come from? I can’t draw any more from business,—no, I have to use my credit,—it’s the same as capital. It’s no use, Kate. These people will get paid somehow, I suppose; and the business! why, let

alone these drops in the bucket, I have more to pay down town, than most men could stagger under. I can't give you the money, and that's the end of it ; and I want you and the children to dress decently ; wherever else you can pinch, don't let it be in the table, I beg ! ”

So that was the end of the matter for this night, until other bills, or the sight of the old ones again, should call out a fresh burst of ill-humor.

It was a difficult task set for Mrs. Bleeker, and one she had striven faithfully to accomplish for many years. Things had been growing worse so fast lately, that she had the desperate hope, that they must end soon. Her whole time was occupied in contriving how to make these very bills as small as possible, while meeting Mr. Bleeker's express charge to have their wardrobes, and the table, abundantly supplied. Yet such scenes as these, constantly repeated, was her reward,—and she knew, from many little things said in these moods, that her husband's business affairs must be much more involved.

It was hard, after she had been taxing both strength and ingenuity to save a little towards quarter-day, to have Mr. Bleeker produce a

cane, or bring home a picture that he fancied, and which cost twice the amount. When he had ready money, or ready credit, no man was more liberal and generous than Mr. Bleeker ; though that could not be called true generosity which gave his wife more pain than pleasure. It was not a solitary instance of selfishness, called by this pleasant name.

Then there was Tom growing up—a perfect copy of his father—and how could she avert the effect of such an example, or tell her child that his father was in fault ? And Josephine already had many foolish and extravagant ideas.

Certainly Mrs. Bleeker's heart that night was "weary and heavy laden," but she had long ago learned where to bring her burdens, that they might be lightened. But for this knowledge, and its daily, hourly application, she could not have had the quiet cheerfulness which every mother, and mistress of a household, must maintain.

Tom began one of his endless stories about "us boys" when he came in to tea, and found his father not at all disposed to listen and laugh at his school-boy jokes and adventures. Josephine, whose afternoon had been profitably spent in promenading Broadway, and admiring

shop windows, looked forward rather dolefully to a return of village dulness and school restraints.

"Aunt Lucy says she can't see why you send us to such an out-of-the-way country school. I met her, this afternoon, and she wanted to know when we were going back again. I don't see either, mamma. It isn't the least bit fashionable."

"I know that perfectly well, Josephine. I suppose your aunt would wonder still more if she knew that was one of the very reasons the school was selected."

"And taking care of our own rooms! She says she never heard any thing like it."

"Aunt Lucy's memory doesn't go back very far," said Mrs. Bleeker, playfully.

"How? mamma!"

"Once upon a time, two little girls lived with their grandmother and uncle, who not only took care of their own rooms, but swept and dusted the rest of the house by turns, and knew very well how to dry cups and saucers."

"But that was in old times, you know. People don't do such things now."

"What kind of people?"

"Stuck up! I suppose," interrupted Tom,

more for the fun of teasing his sister than for any democratic opinions of his own.

"Tom ! what an elegant expression !" said his mother, reprovingly.

"Well,—it spoils my hands so."

"Spoils them ! for what ?"

"Why, practising. You have no idea how my right hand has spread !"

"Poor thing !" said Tom, again. "Only hear what a misfortune, papa."

Mr. Bleeker only knew that some kind of a dispute was going on, and it annoyed him ; so he recommended Tom to "take care of his tea and toast, and let his sister alone."

"If we were poor people," continued Josephine, in an under tone, to her mother, "there might be some use in it ! but then, of course, we're not."

"Why of course ?"

"Why ? because we live in a nice house, and have three servants, and every thing handsome in it."

The little girl looked around the room with a great deal of satisfaction, as if to prove that what she said must be true. The gas was lighted, and blazed down cheerfully on the table, with its neat china, and Sheffield tea-set, the

spotless linen cloth, the silver napkin rings of her father and mother. The back parlor was used as a dining-room, Mr. Bleeker, disliking the dull front basement, and both rooms were furnished in the ordinary style of the day, with curtains, and mirrors, and lounges. Of course there was a piano. Every house has its piano as much as its tea-table nowadays.

“Dear me ! I shall be so home-sick !” sighed Miss Josephine presently. “Miss Anthon’s parlor, the best room in the seminary, has nothing but an ingrain carpet, and old Venetian blinds ; with chairs like ours in the nursery ; open work seats, and they’re always set so stiff in rows, up against the wall. And then our table ; it’s as long as from the street to the back piazza ; and teachers *sprinkled* all along to keep us quiet. Why, only think ! for tea, we have nothing in the world but a plate of bread, and a plate of butter, and a plate of dried beef ; then a plate of bread again, so and so, and so ; strung along, like Peter’s blocks, over the carpet.”

“My ! we don’t even get beef at our table,” chimed in Tom. “One night, we had *cheese* ! You ought to have seen Charlie Spear ! He asked to be introduced to it !”

“And a pitcher of water at each end, and a tea tray in the middle for the old girls,” continued Josephine; “that’s every individual thing; and then if we laugh a little, and begin to have a good time, one of the teachers is sure to call out, ‘Young ladies! do you know where you are?’”

“It’s something like State prison, school is, isn’t it?” said Olive, who had come down late, and had been silently swallowing these details, with her biscuit and quince marmalade. “I’m glad I don’t have to go.”

“You ought to be,” returned her sister with a martyr-like air, forgetting how a little while ago she had been wild to be sent to boarding-school, and how incessantly she had teased until her wish was gratified. Josephine’s memory was, like her aunt Lucy’s, very good at forgetting.

Meantime Mr. Bleeker had taken up his hat, and let himself out of the front door without a word. This moody silence and departure was by no means a new thing to his wife, but even Tom and Josephine noticed it, and looked at each other.

Mrs. Bleeker was glad her husband was absent, at Tom’s next observation.

“I say, mother! am I going to have an allowance this term? all the boys have. It looks so mean not to have one!”

“Yes, every body is expected to have pocket money now. Don’t they, Tom?” added Josephine.

“I have tried to think of every thing you need, both of you. You won’t have much occasion for it.”

“Oh, I don’t mean to spend mine!” said Joe. “I intend to save it.”

“I *don’t*,” said Tom, flatly. “What’s the use of money if you can’t spend it? I don’t see. There’s always something going on. Girls don’t need money any way!”

“How many ‘don’ts’,” said Josephine, critically, in payment for Tom’s thrust at girlish inferiority. “How much—come now, mother, how much a week?” pursued Tom.

“‘Mother’ again!” interrupted Joe. “Why don’t you say mamma? Clementina says, nobody says mother now!”

“You had just as many ‘says’ as he had ‘don’ts,’” said Olive collectedly. “Mamma gives me a penny a week.”

“And that is more than mamma had at your age. Pocket money was not thought necessary in the days that your aunt Lucy knew how to sweep. If we had a new ribbon on our bonnets every winter, and had them bleached in

the spring, we were very grand. But I suppose Lucy has forgotten that too," she added with a little smile.

"Was our great-grandmother so very poor?" inquired Olly, who of all things liked to hear what her mother had done and said when she was a little girl.

"No, not poor; only careful. She did not think it necessary for such little "tots" to have winter bonnets, and summer bonnets, and spring bonnets, too, for that matter. I remember she undertook to bleach them herself once, some open-work straws, that we were very proud of, and they were both burnt, so we wore our blue gingham sun-bonnets to church all summer!"

"Oh, dreadful! how *did* you feel!" said Josephine, pitying her mother's "hapless childhood" from the bottom of her heart.

"I believe your aunt Lucy was very much distressed, but I don't think I *felt* at all. I was always certain that every body respected my grandmother, and uncle Peter."

"But about my allowance," said Tom, not particularly interested in open-work straw bonnets. "Won't you speak to papa about it, please? He promised it to me last term, but I suppose he forgot it, for I did not have a cent after that you gave me was gone."

Mrs. Bleeker remembered it. Her husband was very apt to make rash and liberal promises, fully intending at the time to fulfil them ; but, as he said, “ he was always so hampered by some old account.”

The matter was of much more importance to Tom than he was willing to acknowledge. Anticipating this large income, he had spent all his cash in hand, and when pencils, and library fines, and drawing paper came to be thought of, Tom had incurred debts to divers of his classmates, for odd dimes and quarters, which he was obliged to leave unsettled on his return for the holidays.

Tom intended to write to his father for a remittance first,—and then he concluded to “ talk it out,” and explain the whole matter when he should get home. Day after day passed, but poor Tom’s courage melted away instead of increasing, and the time did not come. That very night,—the last but one at home,—he had fully intended to confess his short-comings ; but as we have seen, Mr. Bleeker’s mood did not invite any such confidence. Happy would it have been for all parties around that bright centre table, if Tom had owned his fault. Mrs. Bleeker would have given him the amount twice

over, if it had been necessary to clear him, for she knew from what slight beginnings in the boy, come the mill-stones of debt, hung about the neck of harassed, anxious men.

"I don't think I can promise any regular allowance," said Mrs. Bleeker, as the little party broke up, "though I will see that you each have something in your purses. And whatever else you do," she added decidedly, "don't anticipate your means. Better go without, than to get any thing charged. You never have any good of your money then, when it does come."

"Yes, mamma?" said Tom meekly, taking up his bed-room candle, and feeling very much like a culprit as his mother wished him good night; for one fault leads to another so surely, that a sense of cowardly concealment made Tom's pillow very hard and uncomfortable that night.

CHAPTER IV.

THE JOURNEY.

“Shrink not to aim the shafts of wit
At all that’s mean and narrow!
But, oh, before you bend the bow,
Be sure it holds the arrow!”

OSGOOD.

TOM was to escort himself and Josephine back to Rockville, where the Seminary was situated. They considered themselves very important members of society, you may be sure, at this early independence, when Mr. Bleeker had procured the checks, and the tickets, though he still stood on the platform to bid them good-by.

“Take care of the checks, Tom,” said his father, handing them in through the window, “and look out for your head, Joe,—don’t be stretching it out of the window every five minutes!”

Tom felt equal to receiving the Bank of England keys in trust, just then, and Josephine

was too much occupied with her fellow-passengers to care for any dull wintry landscape. She wondered if the lady in the blue veil knew that she was thirteen years old, and going to boarding-school. Then she looked at all the travelling dresses in the car, and decided in her own mind as to who were ladies, and who were not, by the style of them. No lady, said the Rockville code of gentility, ought to travel without a stone-colored travelling dress, gaiter boots, Highland shawl, barège veil, and fancy travelling basket.

“Take care of yourselves,” said Mr. Bleeker, again, as the steam whistle sounded, “and Tom—I say—mind those checks.” With which general directions, and parting admonition, they settled themselves back comfortably on the seat, to talk over matters.

“Pretty good time!” said master Tom, patronizingly, as they were jerked out of the depot. He was consulting his new silver watch for the hundred and fortieth time that morning. “I wish it had been a gold one, while the governor was about it.”

“Why, Tom!” exclaimed Josephine at this filial disrespect, which she had never heard her brother venture upon before.

“Oh, that’s what all of us boys say now.”

"When you are sure father is out of hearing," said Joe, brilliantly ; "you wouldn't dare to do it any other way. That's more of Charlie Spear, I suppose."

"Well, what if it is—Charlie's a first-rate fellow, let me tell you. I should like to room with him, that's all. How about the allowance, Joe?"

Somehow speaking of Charlie Spear always put Tom in mind of money matters. Josephine looked very mysterious, and shook her head.

"What did mother give you?—come tell," urged Tom.

"An account book," said Joe, "to put down all my expenses in."

"So she did me ; are you going to ? I can't be bothered."

"Well, I rather think I shall," answered Joe, meditatively. "Mamma has always had one, you know, ever since before she was married to papa, and she says it's an excellent plan. Yes, I think it must be nice to know exactly what you spend, and I intend to be very economical."

"On five dollars!" said master Tom, in what he considered a very ironical tone. "Come, you might as well own up—that's what I have."

"You won't get any more, any way, let me tell you ; so you might as well make the best of it."

"How do *you* know ?"

"Why, because mamma gave me a regular talking to, when she was packing my trunk ; and she said, that was every cent she could spare, and I must make the best use of it, and that she shouldn't have given it to us all at once, only she thought we were old enough to be trusted, and it was time we knew the use of money. I have gloves to buy out of mine, and a new pair of overshoes, that's all I know of now."

"Oh, well ;" said Tom, trying to banish the uneasiness that this final decision of his mother's caused him,—“when that's gone—there's more where it came from, I know.”

"But there *isn't*," persisted Josephine, "at any rate for us ! Mamma said distinctly that I was not to write for any more, for she considered this all-sufficient ; and she was obliged to be very, *very* economical herself."

"Pooh !" said Tom again, "that isn't *me* ! Well, don't talk any more, child ! the cars make noise enough," so he relapsed into an unamiable silence, and left Josephine to her book, or her meditations.

She opened her book first, a new one, in which she had taken the precaution to leave some leaves uncut, that she might have a pretext to use a pretty little ivory knife Olive had given her at parting. It was necessary to draw off her glove in order to do this,—at least she found it so, and looked around to see if any one was observing her. The lady in the blue veil was looking at her, and as Josephine noticed this, her attitude became still more studied, and she raised her arm with what she considered an extremely graceful movement, to display her hand holding the paper cutter to the best advantage. Then she read a few lines, and glanced up again to see if she was still observed. This time she had the satisfaction of discovering that the lady not only noticed her, but had also drawn the attention of her companion, a very handsome man, with dark whiskers, and a moustache. They were decidedly the most stylish-looking people in the cars, and the foolish girl's cheeks glowed again, at the thought that they were admiring her.

Poor child ! if she had only known that they were smiling at her silly affectation of manner, and the evident vanity in displaying her ungloved hand so publicly !

But she did not dream of it, and began to wish that her gold pencil could be changed into a ring to set it off to more advantage, and then she raised her pencil—which had been conspicuously thrust into the belt of her travelling dress—and marked a passage in the book before her, with another flourish, more ridiculous than the last.

She did not particularly fancy that passage, indeed she had not read it at all, and could not fix her mind on the story, but went on wondering why her mother never allowed her to have presents of jewelry, of which she was particularly fond,—making her promise never even to borrow it of her school-mates, as girls often do. Josephine's grand scheme of economy was only to be able to purchase a gold clasp to a bracelet of Clementina's hair, which she could plait very nicely herself; hair bracelets being quite the rage at Rockville.

The morning passed rapidly in this profitable manner, with scarcely a glance at the beautiful mountain scenery through which they were whirled, grand, and full of variety as it was, even in the depth of winter; nor did Tom condescend to show the slightest animation of manner, until, on halting at a way station, he

discovered a familiar face in the midst of a group on the platform. There was a very handsome carriage and pair, evidently belonging to them, for the servant was lifting a large travelling trunk from the box, under the direction of a tall gentleman. The ladies wore handsome furs, and one of them was "fussing," as Tom called it, over a lad about his own age.

"Oh, my dear—do make him put on an extra overcoat!" she said, appealing to the tall gentleman, who answered abruptly, "Nonsense! he won't need it in the cars."

"And, my *dear* boy, *do* write the very *instant* you get there! I shan't have a quiet moment until I have heard,—and *do* be careful about your flannels!"

The tall boy in the gray overcoat and blue neck tie, did not seem to fancy being made the object of so much public maternal solicitude, or being kissed twice over by each of his grown-up sisters.

Josephine thought his face looked familiar, and seeing Tom start forward and nod very eagerly to attract his attention, asked who it was. But he was saved the trouble of answering, by the final parting, which came the next minute.

“Now, *do* be careful, there’s a dear boy. Mr. Spear—*do charge* Charles not to expose himself, and not to study *too hard!*”

“No fear of that!” said Tom, as Master Charlie stumbled into the car over somebody’s carpet bag, as ungraceful an entrance as he could well make; but Josephine, who had only seen him at a distance before, began to admire him instantly, having, in the first place, heard very little else than his name and performances, from Tom, all through vacation.

He was taller and older-looking than her brother, one reason that Tom felt particularly honored by his notice, and quoted him on all occasions; and now he was in an uncomfortable worry until he could get a seat beside him, leaving Josephine in a most uncereemonious manner.

But it was not long, for the station at which they were to take a stage, was reached an hour after. It was a stage-sleigh that awaited them, the ground being covered with snow here, as in New York, though the roads had by no means the well-packed firmness of New England winter travelling.

Josephine had the extreme satisfaction of being handed out by Charlie Spear,—blue neck

tie and all,—but the mortification, shortly after, of seeing him choose a seat by the driver, instead of by herself and Tom, where they had made room for him.

“ I hope he isn’t going to drive,” said Josephine, in terror, as the horses, exhilarated by the keen air, pranced a little in starting.

“ You needn’t be the least afraid if he does—he knows every stage driver on the road. I wish I did, I wouldn’t be poked back in here ! ”

If “ the *going*,” as the driver called it, had been a little bit better, the afternoon drive would have been much pleasanter than the smoke and closeness of the cars. There was just enough snow to make the country unpicturesque. The unpainted farm-houses looked blacker than ever, with the moisture dripping from the roofs, and banks of half-melted snow by the garden fences, and before the unused front doors. The barn-yards were all in a slop,—the cattle drooping and muddy, even the geese, usually so spotless, “ had on yesterday’s white pantaloons,” and the hens picked their way cautiously, as if afraid of similar splashes.

“ Oh, dear ! ” sighed Josephine, “ how I do

pity people that live in the country ! Nothing could ever *tempt* me to ! ”

“ Nor me either,” said Tom, watching the farmer’s sons of one particular homestead, who, in blue frocks, and pantaloons rolled up over their heavy boots, were feeding the cattle.

Josephine did pity them from the bottom of her heart. To be sure, Rockville Seminary was in a country villiage, but then they had teachers and boarders from the city, and it was not so entirely out of the world ! Josephine wondered how people could exist, really settled down in the country for life,—with no shops, but a village store where *every thing* was sold ; no concerts, or parties when they came to grow up ; and, worse than all, dressing in such a plain, old-fashioned manner. It reminded her of what their mother had told them.

“ There’s mamma, though,” she said, presently, “ she was brought up in the country ! and Aunt Lucy.”

“ Aunt Lucy hates it now though,” answered Tom decidedly, “ bad enough ! ”

“ I really believe mamma doesn’t ! she’s always talking about uncle Peter.”

“ What an old codger he is, though ! ” said Tom.

“Oh Tom! I’m sure he was very good to mamma.”

“But he’s an old codger for all that,” persisted Tom, who always *did* persist when he saw his sister look shocked at any of his boyish impertinence. “My! what a shocking bad hat that was! and such coat skirts! made in the year one.”

“I do hope he won’t pay us another visit very soon, I must say,” and Josephine laughed in spite of her quick sense of what was proper respect to so excellent a man. “I did feel so ashamed, when Roxy Curtis asked me if he was any relation of ours, that night at the Juvenile Concert. Don’t you remember he almost cried when he heard all the children sing ‘The Watcher,’ and pulled out that great yellow and red silk handkerchief, and blew his nose so loud, that every body looked round? Well, *I* never want to live in the country, and I never *will*! That’s settled!”

“There’s the Brick!” called out Charlie Spear, just then turning half round on the coach box. Josephine was thankful she had not known he was driving before, or she should have “been in an agony,” as she afterwards told Clementina. There was but a little way to go now: for “the Brick” was the large boarding-

house belonging to the boy's school, the Academy, as it was called, and "The Seminary," to which Josephine was destined, though in the same town, and under the same government, was a mile nearer, quite in the village.

Josephine began at once to collect veil, book and packages generally ; for, notwithstanding her lamentations, she was very fond of her teachers and schoolmates, and her heart beat quick at the thought of so soon seeing them all again. She scarcely even noticed Charlie Spear's flourishing bow from the box, as she saw her favorite Miss Fanshaw, and their Principal, Miss Anthon, standing at the door in the wintry twilight ; and the sitting-room windows gleaming cheerily from lamp and fire.

"The stage is in !" "Joe has come."
"It's Miss Bleeker !" "How dy'e do, Joe ?"
"Welcome back again !" sounded variously from the little group crowding into the hall ; for the term did not fairly commence until the next day, and there was less restraint than usual. The trunk was set inside of the gate. Josephine was surrounded and carried in to the fire triumphantly. The great-hall door shut with a clang, and vacation was over to Josephine at the fireside, and Tom speeding towards "the Brick."

CHAPTER V.

SCHOOL LIFE.

"The gayety, the gloom, the tasks, aims, hopes, and disappointments that go to make up a school-girl's life."—JOURNAL OF A YEAR.

"DID you have a nice time, Clem?" inquired Josephine, on her knees before her trunk the next day.

"Splendid!" said her room-mate, who was setting the book shelves in order "I have loads to tell you—went every where, and saw every thing! Have you seen my Dictionary lying round? Oh! you didn't know our class was to go into Latin Reader this term, did you?"

"Latin again! and Algebra too, I suppose," said Josephine wofully. "What in the world is the good of girls learning Latin?"

"Dear knows! and as for Algebra, I never could say the multiplication table yet, could you? See, I've got one pasted into the back, for

I don't stand by Miss Chamberlain now, she used to prompt me."

"Capital! why, where did you get it?"

"I happened to see it on the cover of our Milly's old writing-book, and begged it of her. Many new dresses, Joe?"

"Three!" answered Josephine in a very self-satisfied manner.

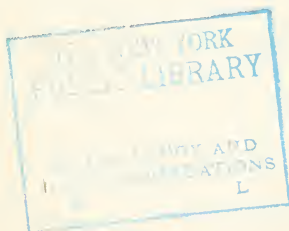
"Well, I have five; a checked silk, and two mousseline-de-laines, a chintz, and a plain cashmere. They're made sweetly, with flowing sleeves, and the silk has a basque."

"Mamma doesn't think I'm old enough to wear silks, and a basque;" said Josephine. "I wonder how long before she will consider me a young lady?"

"But I have a lovely scarlet sacque, trimmed with black velvet! Oh, here it is, and here are my new dresses!"

"That puts me in mind," said Clementina, "Ann Brown is back again. Don't let's speak to her this term. She's got a black silk dress,—such a flimsy thing—I do believe it's made out of her mother's, or somebody's, and dyed!"

Josephine winced at this speech, for her very best dress, a plain, pearl-colored cashmere, was made from one her mother had worn two





Josephine and Clementina.—p. 63.

winters. It was as fresh as possible, it is true, and prettily made—quite as good as a new one, and even Clementina's prying eyes had not discovered its previous existence, as she held it up and shook it out. But Josephine imagined she did, and felt uncomfortable accordingly.

"She must want to go to school more than I do!" pursued Clementina. "How do you like the new girls?"

"I think Agnes Hadly is a great deal prettier than her sister. Is she going to be in our class? and Miss Hill dresses her hair beautifully. Oh! Clementina, I learned an elegant new way—I'll show you by and by—but those Miss Danas?—they look very *common*."

"So they are," said Clem, "nothing in the world but farmers' daughters—going to stay but two terms."

"Oh," said Josephine, diving down to the bottom of her trunk again, and wondering if Clementina had ever heard that *her* mother had been brought up on a farm. Her foolish pride made her sensitive and suspicious even towards those she called her friends.

"Doesn't this little bit of a room look funny, coming from home?" she added, to change the subject as entirely as possible,

“ though we used to think it quite large when Marianne Fanshaw had it.”

“ I guess you’d think so if you could see my room at home ! I have a Brussels carpet, rose-buds on a dark green ground, fancy cottage chairs, rosewood backs, and an elegant French bedstead. I do wish you could see it ! There, you haven’t told me why your mother did not let you come New-Year’s. We had every thing our own way. I did so wish for you, dear ! ”

“ Thank you, darling ! ” for, as we have said, these two young ladies were “ *devoted* ” friends, and had written to each other every three days through vacation, although Mrs. Bleeker had not thought it best to accept Mrs. Jones’s New-Year’s invitation, as she had never met her, and knew nothing of the family government and influences. She did not think it would be a healthy atmosphere for her daughter, whose natural vanity, and love of dress, seemed to have developed rapidly, since her intimacy with Miss Jones.

“ And those sweet verses,” said Clementina, “ I showed them to several, and they all said it sounded like Miss Landon. You must certainly copy them in my album ! Cousin Bob said—you know my cousin Bob is an author,

that is, he has written a lovely book of travels, and thinks of having them published some day. Bob says they ought to be sent to the Lady's Book ; he hasn't the least doubt but Mr. Godey would be delighted to print them, and pay you ever so much."

Josephine's face glowed again ! She was very proud of her talent for rhyming, but to think of having her verses praised by grown up people and printed ! that was beyond the highest flight of even her vivid imagination. She was so absorbed in the blissful contemplation, that she had not noticed a gentle tap on the door,—and now it opened softly, and a fair, gentle face, with blue eyes, and bands of golden hair shading a low but clear forehead, looked in.

" Busy unpacking, are you, girls ? Don't let me disturb you. I only came for a peep at my old quarters, and to see if Joe is rested. How do you like it here, Clementina ? who is going to have my window ? "

" Oh ! Josephine, I'm quite willing, she likes trees, even when there's no leaves on, and hills, and sky. I'd rather have this one—for I can see the girls go by from the classes, and all that's going on."

" Come in, dear Marianne, please do ! "

urged Miss Fanshaw's ardent admirer, Josephine. "Sit right there now, and eat some of these bonbons. I saved them from New-Year's for Clem, but there's plenty more ; Clem has some too,—haven't you?—and I've a *hundred* things to tell you, and talk over."

Miss Fanshaw, who had not been home in vacation, suffered herself to be installed in the only *real* chair in the room, at her old window. It looked out upon the open country, for the Seminary was at the end of the village, and only the garden divided it from a little common, bordered by pine woods, which were bending and sighing now, in the shrill wind that swept down from the hills. The room was situated at the end of a wing, commonly known among the girls as "Poverty Lane," though it was strange how many chose to abide there. The window that Clementina had chosen, opened on a piazza, from which stairs descended to the play-ground, at the back of the recitation rooms.

It was Miss Fanshaw's last term, and she was to room in the main building with Miss Bailey, the Latin teacher. Both teachers and scholars loved Marianne Fanshaw ; it was not only for her beauty, or her sweet voice, or the gentle grace and dignity of her manner ; there

was something beyond all this, or rather which tempered personal and mental graces into harmony. All the younger girls, even the junior class, looked up to Miss Fanshaw, and thought it a great pleasure and honor to be able to do any thing for her. Among them all, Josephine was acknowledged to be her favorite ; nor was it a great wonder, for she was pretty, and lady-like, and clever with her books and pen.

Josephine, on her part, was Miss Fanshaw's champion all through the school, ready to maintain that she sang and played, and wrote compositions "better than any one in the world." A wholesale assertion, which others were inclined to dispute.

"I have had a great many happy hours here," said Miss Fanshaw, looking around the room lovingly, as if every piece of furniture was endeared to her from old association. "I don't think any other room will ever be quite the same. I believe I know every darn in the carpet, and every crack in the wall. You will have to be very careful of that table between the doors, though ! It has played me more than one trick."

"Oh, is that the one that tipped over, and inked your examination composition ?" asked

Josephine. "We were just saying how shabby the furniture looked ; and this old carpet, only look at that great patch !"

"That patch ! that's a delightful patch, girls ! I put it in myself, and worked a whole Wednesday afternoon on it ! And as for the table, Minnie and I mended it after that unfortunate turn over, with a hammer, and some nails, borrowed of Jim. It does need a new cover."

"Yes, indeed," said Clementina, "I noticed that last term, and begged one of mamma—see, it's scarlet and black embossed, and won't fade like that old cotton thing."

"Then if I was you—it does make a decided improvement," said Marianne, pausing to notice the effect, as Clementina smoothed it carefully over the square painted table,—“if I was you, I should give the ‘old cotton thing’ to Ann Brown ; I dare say she would be glad of it. Her table has no cover at all.”

The little girls exchanged glances.

"We don't mean to speak to her at all this term," Clementina took upon herself to answer. "You may give it to her, though, if you like ! I dare say it's as good as she has at home."

The smile passed away from Miss Marianne's pleasant face.

“What has she done to offend you?”

“Nothing! only I don’t choose to associate with servant girls!” said Clementina, still more pertly, conscious that Miss Fanshaw was offended.

“Miss Brown is too far beyond you in years, as well as her studies,” said Marianne gravely, “to be hurt by such an unkind remark from a little girl; but it is not the less unladylike, Clementina. She does no more than I should do, or than it would be noble for either of you to do in the same position.”

“Oh well, we never shall have to, any of us,—so it makes no difference. Our fathers are all rich people!”

“They may not always stay so! and even if they did, so much more reason that their daughters should grow up ladylike, well-bred women.”

“I wish we could learn some rule, just as we do in Latin grammar, and then stay ladylike always,” said Josephine, who had not spoken before.

“Nothing easier, dear—you have learned it long ago, I dare say, if you only make your doings and sayings agree. A golden rule,—there’s a special rule in the same book about people who are too poor to wear ‘gay clothing.’”

Both of the girls looked abashed for a moment, Josephine particularly, for she had been taught more reverence for Miss Fanshaw's "Book of Rules," though she had not yet learned to walk by it, as we have seen ; and they were glad to hear the bell of the monitress at that moment come swinging through the piazza, and down the stairs, calling them all to the great recitation room. The monitress and her bell were among the hardships of school life, most frequently complained of by the girls. The bell never seemed to hold its peace. It roused them from that last pleasant morning nap,—it summoned the indolent to the recitation hall at prayer time, leaving a disordered room to be marked by the monitress on her daily round. It interrupted playhours by the call to study, and sent them to bed before they were half ready to go, though half-past nine was quite late enough for any of them. And at ten the spiteful bell rang again, for the last time, it is true, and then came an opening and shutting of doors, to see if all the lights were out, for *that* was a curfew.

How many, half-undressed, groped and shivered their way into bed after it had ceased ! how many belated and rebellious subjects were

dotted on the blank of the monitress, to be reprimanded before the whole school on Saturday morning, when the report was read ! Tasks unfinished, buttons and hooks unfastened, chapters unread,—were laid aside at that provoking, monotonous ring, never to be properly attended to, and finally to swell the great list of neglected duties that impeded the school-girl's progress, and brought her into disgrace, when examination day finally arrived. So much for "delaying the work in its season,"—for what are school-days, but a preparation for the discipline of life, where the tasks are harder, our strength and ambition less, and the final award, without appeal !

Miss Anthon said something like this, as she welcomed them back again to school duties, and gave each girl her place and studies for the term. There was, in all, over sixty scholars, some few of them from Rockville, and not boarding at the Seminary ; of all ages, from the little girls in the Junior class, to the young ladies in the Fourth Year, just finishing their school days. Most of them were dressed very plainly, in accordance with Miss Anthon's known wish, for, as it was a country school, many of the pupils could not afford, or pro-

cure, if their means had allowed of it, the little fineries that girls brought up in cities are accustomed to think indispensable. Even Marianne Fanshaw, seated at the head of her class, wore only a chintz morning dress, and plain linen collar. Clementina looked quite out of place, with a pale pink mousseline de laine, and Valenciennes edging around the neck and sleeves.

She wore a bracelet, too, and rings innumerable, some of them by no means elegant ; a red agate and a brown agate on the same hand ; but then agate rings made so much show ! Long blue satin ribbons tied her hair, and hung streaming over her shoulders, for Clementina was by no means choice in the agreement of colors ; and did not know that plain, brown taffeta, the color of her hair, would be in much better taste, as well as more serviceable. Hair ribbons were another of Josephine's trials, her choice being confined to a black and a brown pair.

Miss Anthon read all the rules of the school, so that there might be no excuse for the new comers in disobeying them. They were not very numerous, or very harsh, but the most implicit obedience was required, and their

teacher placed *duty* above any prize or reward that could be offered to them, and said their own sense of what was right and wrong—in other words, *their conscience*, must be a more rigid monitor than any she could appoint.

Some of the girls looked eager and interested, others scarcely listened, and fidgeted about in their seats. It was easy for their teacher to see where was the “good ground,” and where she was to look for thorns and briars, instead of fruit, in return for her careful culture.

There was a general buzz after dismissal, for there were to be no recitations that day,—each one exclaiming over her lessons, or her place, very few entirely satisfied with Miss Anthon’s judgment.

“I should have thought I might have gone into Virgil,” one said, who might have done so if she had not neglected Cæsar, the last term.

“I heard Miss Anthon give you Paley,” said Ellen Hadley to Clementina. “It’s as easy as knitting work.”

“I don’t think so—it looks as stupid and hard as possible, but there’s no words to look out, that’s one comfort! I hate Latin! French is some use, everybody speaks French,

and I suppose I shall travel when I get through school, and I must have Italian on account of my music. Nobody sings English any more, mamma says ! ”

“ What a little bunch of affectation ! ” said Ellen Hadley, turning away. She was one of the “ great girls,” who sometimes patronized the little ones, and sometimes locked the door upon them as “ plagues ! ”

“ Yes, she’s worse than ever, this term. By the way, Ellen, I do believe Ann has been studying all vacation. Miss Anthon has put her in our year ! ”

“ You don’t say so ! well she’s to be a teacher you know, poor thing.”

“ We don’t call Miss Anthon, ‘ poor thing,’ ” some voice near them said.

“ Oh ! are you there, Marianne ? Only think. Ann is to be in the fourth year. I was waiting for my list, when I heard Miss Anthon tell her so.”

“ Then we shall have to look out for the valedictory, that’s all,” answered Miss Fanshaw playfully.

“ But no one was ever helped through so fast before. It shows great partiality, *I* think,” pouted Ellen Hadley, who barely maintained her own place.

"It shows that no one ever studied so hard before!" said Marianne.

"Oh! well, I suppose she *has* to—thank goodness I don't, that's all; I can stay five years at school if I like."

"What a privilege!" laughed Maria Allen, another of the Fourth-Year girls. "For my part, the sooner I get away the better, don't you say so, Marianne?"

"I do," said Clementina, elbowing her way very unceremoniously through the taller group. "Only think, Ann Brown's in your year. She began with us!"

"She didn't like you well enough to stay, I suppose," said Maria Allen.

"Nobody wanted her," retorted the forward child, though Ellen and Maria both had themselves to blame for encouraging Clementina in her pertness. They laughed at her speeches, and called her "a queer, clever little thing," to her face, and said she was "impertinent," and "self-conceited," to other people.

"Miss Jones—Clementina," called Miss Anthon from her desk, so loud that all the girls standing near stopped to listen, "you have 'Sismondi's Literature of the South of Europe,' in your box of books, I believe. I should like

you to lend it to Miss Brown this term. It is an expensive book, I know, and I will be answerable for its careful usage."

"Yes," said Ellen, delighted at Clementina's look of annoyance. "That great heavy book of your aunt Jane's."

There was no help for it, as Miss Anthon had made the request, and Clementina would not use it for two years to come. It had been packed by mistake, in the first place. The Fourth-Year girls looked delighted, all but Marianne, who whispered as she passed near her, "Send the table cover at the same time, there's a good girl, you will save Ann two or three dollars by lending it to her!"

Still Clementina grumbled to Josephine as they reached their own room, that "it was too bad to have to oblige *that* Ann Brown twice in one day," and Josephine was so foolish as to think so too, though all they could find to dislike in her was, that she was plain, and poor, and swept the halls and school rooms in return for her tuition, rather than accept the provision made by the trustees for those who were unable to educate themselves.

CHAPTER VI.

EVIL COMMUNICATIONS.

"I said of laughter, It is mad; and of mirth, What doeth it?"

ECCLESIASTES.

TOM, in his room at "the Brick," was also unpacking, though it was a very different affair from the orderly arrangement of shelves and drawers made by his sister and Clementina.

His trunk stood in the middle of the floor, wide open; and when he wanted any thing "he *dove* for it," as he informed Charlie Spear, who was lounging on the bed with his feet upon one of the posts.

It was a single bed, for Tom roomed alone, an arrangement he did not much like, though if he could not have Charlie, he did not care about any one. Charlie's "Chum," as he always called him, was "a slow, stupid muff!" that is, he always had good recitations, never robbed hen roosts, or melon patches, or pasted

caricatures of his teachers on the chapel walls ; gentlemanly accomplishments to which master Spear was much addicted. According to his own story, he had been the hero of a thousand and one marvellous adventures and escapes. Certain it is, that Rockville Academy was the fifth school he had been sent to since he began to prepare for college, and he was about as ready to enter now, as when his name was registered at the first one.

The result of Tom's various dives was displayed about the room ; a jacket, with a pile of underclothes and a pair of boots on top, in one chair ; a lexicon, a cricket bat, half a large sponge cake, and a half-dozen clean linen collars on another. The table was heaped with an equally miscellaneous collection, and several garments dangled by the leg or arm, over the yawning trunk.

"How about the allowance, Tom ?" said his friend again, lazily folding his arms under his head and raising his feet still higher.

"All right," said Tom, knowingly.

"Handsome come down ! eh ?" inquired Master Spear.

"A V. ! that's all !" and the gold piece was displayed against one eye, then dropped into Tom's vest pocket again.

“Oh! ho, well, that’s something like, now, isn’t it? a V. a month! how did you manage, Tom?”

“Easy enough!” for Tom did not choose to correct the mistake, by acknowledging that the half eagle was the sum of all his receipts from home, for the entire term. He was not at all averse to borrowed plumes, and did not stop to mark the implied falsehood, knowing the consequence it would obtain for him among his school fellows. He could see that he had risen in Charlie Spear’s estimation already.

“Suppose we settle that little account!” he said, with some importance, as he fished up the grammar he had been in search of.

“Oh! no hurry, my dear fellow! not the least!” returned his principal creditor, reaching out a hooked stick, and fishing in his turn for a small blank book which had tumbled out with the grammar, and had excited his curiosity.

“I say, Tom, what’s all this?”

“I don’t know,” said Tom carelessly, and it was true that he did not, for Mrs. Bleeker had put it in without saying any thing to him in packing. It was an expense book, exactly like the one she had given to Josephine, ruled and dated. There was something written in it besides his name, on the fly leaf.

“Out of debt, out of danger!” shouted Master Spear. “Well, that’s a nice joke. I must tell Ferris, and Frank Flanders! Let’s begin, Tommy Goodboy;” and taking out his pencil, he began making entries, repeating them aloud as he did so.

“To one slate pencil—two farthings; four farthings make one penny, and they’re two for a cent, you know!”

“Two leather shoe-strings—one cent; now for a *bust*!”

“One quart of peanuts—six and a quarter.”

“Here—hollo—give us that!” said Tom, catching at the book, with a very red face. Of all things in the world, he could not bear ridicule. He had been laughed into many a plan he could not have been teased or coaxed to join.

“I ought to have put down ‘an apron’ instead of ‘a shoe-string!’” continued Charlie teasingly.

“I say, will you give us that book?” shouted Tom, getting more angry and flushed every minute.

“Come, come, don’t bother a fellow!” said the incorrigible boy, still holding the book at arm’s length.

“What’s all this?” said a tutor, putting his

head in at the door. "Less noise, young gentlemen, if you please."

"Only lesson in book-keeping by double entry," answered Charlie, impudently, as Tom caught hold of the book, and tore off a cover, in the vain attempt to secure it. "School doesn't begin till to-morrow you know, Mr. Peters."

Mr. Peters, who never liked to contend with Charlie Spear, shut the door, and went on his way down the corridor. Tom succeeded in getting the book at last, and threw it into the bottom of the trunk, with his spring clothes, that he did not need for some time to come; so it was shut up, and pushed against the wall out of the way.

"Oh, there's no use firing up!" called out Charlie, as Tom turned away after this exploit, still vexed and fretted; "because this steamboat don't go ahead till the bell rings;" which figurative language was meant to imply, that he should not move until he was ready.

"Great dodge this," continued Master Charlie, "beginning term with a holiday! What are you going to do with yourself this afternoon?"

"We have study hours to-night, I suppose you know."

"But that isn't now, it's only two o'clock ; how are you ?"

"Ten minutes past," said Tom, mollified at the opportunity to exhibit and consult his new watch.

"Suppose we take a sleigh-ride ?" proposed Charlie.

"Where's the sleigh to come from ? that's the next thing !"

"That's easy enough to find. Bill will let me have a cutter, and I'll drive. Suppose we go over to Franklin ?"

"So far ! it's fourteen miles, isn't it ?"

"Why, by sand it is, but by snow it's not half so far. That is, we can go in half the time on runners."

"We shouldn't get back by study hours, I don't believe. What does Bill charge ?" asked Tom, prudently.

"Never mind the expense ; money's no object with a fellow who has five dollars a month, you know ! Most fellows would be precious glad of that a quarter. Frank Flanders now ! Suppose we treat him ?"

"Well, come on," said Tom, magnificently, for the half eagle was a greater sum than he had ever had at one time before, and seemed in-

exhaustible. So they made their way to Frank Flanders' room, and opened the door just as he shut his Virgil with a bang, and started up, declaring that he was ready for any thing. Frank was considered one of the best-natured boys in school ; his tasks cost him little labor, and he was always ready to help any one else. Charlie Spear was not slow to avail himself of it, and in return invited him out on all occasions, for Frank was not overburdened with pocket money.

In the lower hall they encountered Professor Phelps, the principal of the academy, walking up and down with his hands behind him, as he often did. "Exercising" he called it, though the slow pace would not have quickened his pulse a stroke an hour.

"Going to take a walk?" said he, smiling benevolently over his spectacles, as he paused in his saunter for an instant, and made way for them to pass. "Glad to get back to school again, I suppose, Charles."

"Bill," as Charlie Spear familiarly called the landlord of the Rockville Hotel, received the young gentlemen with the most flattering distinction. It was plain that Charlie Spear cared more for his good opinion than for Dr. Phelps' commendation. He drew the man aside, and

whispered to him, nodding towards Tom now and then ; which Tom noticed, and assumed an air of importance accordingly.

“ Certainly—sir—certainly ! ” said he coming forward, “ which horse, Master Spear ? Old Zack goes a little lame just now, and Bob’s been out already this morning. Drove two gentlemen over to the Seminary, with their darters. There’s Joe though, the gray pony, and the blue cutter, with plenty of buffaloes, I suppose. All right, gentlemen ; ” with which Mr. Kelly, who was hostler as well as landlord, disappeared, and presently returned with the establishment in question.

The boys sprang in, Charlie sitting between the other two, and assuming the privileges as well as the office of driver. Tom remonstrated faintly when he found they were on the road to Franklin ; but Frank, who had learned his lessons already, and did not care for discredit marks, even if they were late, told Charlie to “ push on.”

The road was by no means good, a mixture of sand and snow, with deep ruts now and then, over which the runners grated with divers uncomfortable bumps, and a harsh grating sound. It was dark when they reached Franklin, then

the horse must rest and be fed, so study hours had fairly commenced before they set out on their return. The warm days of the thaw were over, a cold dismal wind swept across the empty meadows, and down from the barren hill-sides, benumbing them, wrapped as they were in the "plenty of buffaloes," which consisted of two old robes, very well worn. Joe was by no means a fast horse, not in any sense of the word, and every mile seemed to lengthen before them. They tried to be very merry at first, till Charlie Spear had exhausted his stories, and then they sung and shouted, as they went through the villages, to "astonish the natives," which they did, though not exactly after the fashion they intended. They roared out, "The Battle of the Nile," with exemplary patience, considering Frank Flanders knew nothing of time and tune, and was continually putting the others out of their reckoning. This was relieved by the equally entertaining melody of "A grasshopper sitting on a switchery vine"—Charlie Spear solo, Tom and Frank chorus; then "Uncle Ned," and "Rosa Lee," were introduced variously, and finally they attempted a round, "Three Blind Mice," which proved an entire failure, as they were by this time extremely tired and cold.

The last mile they scarcely spoke to each other, and Tom especially, wished himself safe in bed forty times. But the longest lane has a turning, and the Rockville Hotel, was hailed as in sight at last ; just as the curfew bell of the Seminary rang.

Mr. Kelly was in waiting to receive old Joe, and Tom was for settling up all charges forthwith ; Charlie Spear interposed. He already figured on the landlord's books, and was afraid he would insist on an entire squaring up of accounts. "I'll make it all right," he called out to Mr. Kelly as he gave up the reins ; and taking Tom's arm they were very soon out of that individual's hearing.

They all declared they had had "a good time,"—"a jolly good time,"—as they separated in the hall of the Brick. But the expression of Tom's face changed the instant he had entered his room, and locked his door. He had no chum as the others had to keep up the fire ; the stove door standing open, was choked by a log of wood, green at the large end, and charred at the other ; one of those sticks that will neither go out nor go in, but smoke and sputter away their existence in the most ungenerous and sullen manner. So the room had neither warmth

nor comfort, and the bed was half covered with "unpackings," which were none the better for being tossed off in a heap, on to the floor.

He had smoked a cigar, which was by no means his first, but had made him almost as sick as if it was,—his feet were benumbed with cold, his limbs were cramped by the uncomfortable position he was obliged to sit in while holding the driver,—and his throat and head ached with shouting and singing in the wind. When Tom came to think over this "jolly good time," he had to confess to himself, that he had worked very hard for amusement, to very little purpose ; and then followed the comfortable reflection, that his first day of school was marked by disobedience to the rule of study hours, unprepared lessons, debt and extravagance. Then he fell to wondering what the bill for old Joe would be, and tried to comfort himself as he dropped into an uneasy sleep, by resolving penitently that this should be the last time, and he would pay every body off early in the morning. But alas ! for Tom, this foreshadowing of the empty pleasures of a gay life, had a pleasanter aspect with the morning sun streaming in, and a cheerful fire crackling and snapping in the stove. The good resolutions

arising from the mental and bodily discomfort of the moment, had not been fortified with any strength but his own, and they melted from his recollection like the frost work from the window pane. The "Come, come, there's a good fellow!" or "Don't back out now!" of Charlie Spear and his set, had far more influence.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LOAN.

“Whereupon the crow opened her mouth—down dropped the cheese, and the Fox, seizing it quickly, made off with his booty.

FRENCH FABLES.

THE little room at the end of Poverty Lane, had a very cheerful look one Saturday afternoon, several weeks later in the session.

For a wonder both its occupants had learned Monday's lessons on Friday evening, which was the proper time for them, though they were generally crowded into the hour allowed for review on Monday morning,—fretting the neglectful meanwhile, with an ever recurring sensation of discomfort, no matter how pleasant the pursuit in which they were engaged. It was wonderful how many contrived to spoil the week's holiday after this fashion, or it would have been wonderful if we all did not know from experience how inclined we are to make disagreeable duties

twice as formidable, by putting them off to the very last moment, instead of clearing them from our path at once.

The room was very neat, and orderly, Saturday morning being the time allotted at the Seminary, for the week's grand cleaning up, mending, altering, re-arranging. The girls had made a very marked improvement,—marked by them at least by turning the bed around, and altering the book shelves. What girl has not, in the course of her school life, “made twice as much room” by changing the position of her bedstead, though if measured by rule and line, the gain would be wonderfully diminished. It covered Marianne's “delightful patch,” moreover, and had two “front sides,” a great advantage, when both room-mates decline the back of the bed ! So the girls surveyed it with peculiar satisfaction from every point of view, and made it up between them in the best manner, with a clean white counterpane, which as “No. 20” had fallen to their lot that day.

The books were placed neatly on the shelves, and piled up on the table under the mirror ; and in the foreground were arrayed various little treasures, with scrupulous care. An ornamented china match safe ; a pine burr basket,—Jose-

phine's ivory paper cutter, and Clementina's album. Their trunks, covered with chintz, served as ottomans, and Josephine had under Marianne's directions achieved a carpet foot stool, which when closely examined showed itself to have been an empty raisin box, begged from Mrs. Platt the housekeeper. On this, Josephine's feet were elevated, and with her portfolio on her knee she was scribbling away, now writing a line or two in a flourishing manner, and then biting the top of her pencil for inspiration, that refused to come.

Clementina, at her own window, a basket of bright silks and a pattern before her, was embroidering on perforated card-board, two doves with their beaks united—supposed to be an emblem of the eternal and tender friendship existing between them, and destined to be a book-mark for Josephine's approaching birth day. Neither had spoken for some moments,—Clementina absorbed in the perpetual “one, two, three four”—of her different colored stiches, and Josephine as industrially counting her finger, a species of scanning very much indulged in by juvenile poets.

“There, I might as well give it up first as last”—said she pettishly, tearing up the back

of an old composition on which she had been scribbling.

“Give up what ? ” said Clementina responsively, pricking her needle into the stitch last counted—“seven, eight, nine—no, five, six, seven blues,—never mind, I shall have to count it over again ! Give up what, cherie ? ”—

“Why, this stupid *poem* ! ” ambitious Josephine ! she had always said verses before, but now that she was promoted as editress of the school newspaper, “The Azalia,” she ventured a “poem,” just to see how it would sound when she came to be a magazine contributor.

“What bothers you, darling ? can’t I help you ? ”

Josephine felt scornfully inclined at the idea of Clementina, who sat whole afternoons puzzling over a prose composition—“On Winter,” or, “My Happy Home,”—helping her in this extremity. However, she condescended to impart her troubles. “Why, I want a rhyme—a rhyme to ‘dwell.’ ”

“Oh, is that all. I’m sure ‘dwell’ is easy enough ; there’s ‘bell’ and ‘tell.’ ”

“I’ve tried all those. They won’t do at all. Just listen—‘bell, tell, quell, rebel,’—I tried every one.”

“Quell is a very nice word, I’m sure,” said Clementina. “It always puts me in mind of William Tell.”

“Oh, I know,” answered Josephine, a little impatiently. “Because Gessler tried to quell him ; a word may be a very good word, and not suit.”

“Let’s hear how it’s to go then—how should I know.”

Josephine took up her fair copy of “the poem,”—she always wrote on scraps, and copied it with pen and ink on a clean sheet. She imagined it was impossible to compose any other way.

“It’s ‘Lines to My Brother at Sea,’ you know.”

“But you haven’t any brother at sea, have you ?” inquired the literal Clementina.

“Oh, no ! of course not ; but it does not make any difference,—people that write poetry always *imagine* things.”

“Oh,” said Clementina, relieved by the explanation, “Go on.”

“‘I would that it had been thy lot,’”

“Is that the first of it ?” interrupted Miss Jones.

“The first of this verse.”

“Oh, begin back at the beginning, let’s hear how it commences.”

“Very well,” and Josephine, quite willing to try the effect aloud, turned back the leaf, and began afresh : “ ‘Lines to My Brother at Sea, by Effie.’ I shall take Effie, I think, altogether, Clementina. Now, mind you don’t breathe it to a living soul. How would ‘Effie Effington’ sound ? ”

“Sweet,—the girls would never dream who it was ; it doesn’t sound in the least like Josephine Bleeker. Go on.”

“LINES TO MY BROTHER AT SEA,

“BY EFFIE EFFINGTON.

“Full many a weary month has passed,
Since you from us did part,
Since you left your childhood’s happy home,
With a light and gleeful heart.
Thy future then unclouded seemed,
Thy life unvexed by care,—
And your laughing brow was shaded quite
By curls of nut-brown hair.”

“Oughtn’t it to be ‘you,’ or ‘thou,’ all the time ? ” suggested the audience.

Josephine had thought so herself, but had not skill enough in construction to know how to

remedy it. However, she was not going to be corrected by Clementina. What she wanted of her hearers—and Josephine was by no means a solitary example in authorship—was praise, not criticism.

“Mercy, no, child ! It doesn’t make the least difference ; you put me out, asking questions.”

Clementina bore the rebuke much more meekly than could have been expected,—but she had a profound admiration for the art of rhyming, proportioned to her own lack of original ideas.

“ And is thy brow yet clear and white ?

Thy heart as light as *when*

We wandered by the streamlet’s side,

Or rambled in the glen ?

Has Father Time passed gently o’er

Thy tall and manly form ?

Hast thou ne’er shrunk before the blast ?

Or bowed before the storm ? ”

“ Do you think there’s too many questions ? ” asked Josephine, pausing at the end of the stanza.

“ No,—I don’t know as there is,” said Clementina, warned by past experience, that dissent was not expected. “ Don’t you know that piece

of Mrs. Sigourney's in 'The Young Lady's Class Book ?

“ ‘ Whose is yon sable bier ?
 Why moves that throng so slow ?
 Why does the lonely mother's tear
 In sudden anguish flow ?
 Why is the sleeper laid
 To rest in manhood's pride ?
 How gained his cheek that pallid shade ? ’

don't you know ? We used to speak pieces at our last school, and I spoke that once.”

“ Why, mine is very much in the same style, isn't it,” said the school poetress, delighted with Clementina's fortunate instance. “ Here's the third verse, where ‘ dwell ’ comes in,

“ ‘ I would that it had been thy lot
 Dear brother, here to dwell,
 Beneath our parent's roof tree,’

and there comes that provoking rhyme, or, rather, I can't get one.”

“ How would ‘ spell ’ do,” said Clementina, taking up her work again.

“ Spell ! let me see,” and Josephine gathered her scattered fragments together again.

“ Beneath our father's roof tree,
 Bound by some potent spell.”

“ Why, yes,—that's the very thing, only I

want it to go on, because I have the last two lines done, and it must fit in.

“The darlings of our household,
Their glory and their pride.”

“That is, you and your brother,” said Clementina. “When have you seen Tom?”

“Don’t speak just this moment, there’s a dear child,” answered Josephine, without looking up, and scribbling, as if life depended on her catching the idea she was in quest of.

Clementina accustomed to be thus silenced considered for a moment whether she should join the girls on the play ground, or stay where she was, and finish her dove’s wings. Finally she sat still, looking idly out of the window, at Maria Allen and Ellen Hadly, playing graces on the piazza of the opposite wing, their movements being considerably impeded by the hoods and shawls in which they were wrapped.

Presently, Josephine threw down her pencil and sprang up, her task accomplished, and her face glowing with the excitement of composition.

“Want to hear the rest, Clem?”

Clem nodded, and turned away from the window. “You wrote that last verse in a hurry, Josephine.”

“Didn’t I! It was just as easy as possible. The last line is a quotation, but then it’s exactly what I wanted, and I let it be. I altered that third line again—see.”

“I would that it had been thy lot,
Dear brother here to dwell,
Beneath our parent’s roof tree
And breaking not the spell
That bound us to our happy home
Where we grew side by side,
The darlings of our household,
Their glory and their pride.

“Alas! I fear that even now,
Thou’rt slumbering with the dead,
Where the sea around thee surges,
And heaps billows on thy head.
Where thou hast for thy requiem
The howling of the blast!
As it sweeps by some devoted ship
‘And bends the gallant mast.’”

Clementina was quite as much delighted at the “requiem,” and “howling of the blast,” as Josephine could have desired. On the whole, they came to the conclusion, that it was “the best thing Josephine had ever written,” even surpassing the “Stanzas to Clementina, written in vacation,” which now flourished in the purple

morocco Album on the table. There is no knowing how this delightful excitement would have been calmed down, if "Miss Bleeker," had not been summoned to the parlor by the Monitress to receive "a gentleman."

Saturday afternoon was the only time the pupils of Rockville Seminary were allowed to receive visits, and then one of the teachers was always in the room. Miss Baily sat on the sofa as Josephine came in, trying to play the agreeable to master Tom Bleeker, who did not seem to respond very amiably.

There was always something very pleasant to the Seminary girls in these Saturday visits. First, the being called for, was a distinction, and a flutter of itself. Happy were they who had brothers or cousins at the Academy, and then it not unfrequently happened that other brothers and cousins dropped in—making the levee quiet an animated affair.

Tom Bleeker was very much admired by those who had met him in this way, and Josephine's pride, as well as her sisterly affection made his occasional visits a matter of great consequence.

He did not seem much more amiably disposed towards her, than he had been towards Miss Baily,

now retreated to a front window. He was irritable, and restless, and did not care to talk on the topics Josephine introduced. Letters from home generally formed the theme of the afternoon, and Josephine wondered that she had not heard for over two weeks.

“Does she always sit there”—inquired the young gentleman at length nodding towards Miss Baily.

“Oh, you need not mind *her*,” said Josephine. “She never listens”—in the anticipation of some famous practical joke, which Tom did not care should get back to head quarters again.

But Tom was not satisfied, and the conversation drooped again, until Miss Baily, suddenly recollecting that her window had been up long enough, and that as only the brother and sister were there she might safely leave them alone, without a breach of discipline,—quitted the room to attend to it.

Tom left alone, did not get on a bit the better at first, but as time passed the emergency became more desperate,—and breaking off some boyish narrative suddenly, he inquired if all that five dollars was spent.

“No,” said the unsuspecting Josephine complacently. “I ought to have had my overshoes

before now, I suppose, but the fact is, I hated to change it. When money is changed it goes so fast, you know."

"Just like a girl," thought Tom, who *did* know it, to his cost ; however, so much the better for the plan he had in view. He tried to assume as careless a manner as possible, but his voice would have betrayed his anxiety to any one more skilled in disguises than his sister.

"Oh, I dare say you can get on a bit longer without it, then. Suppose you lend it to me for a day or so. The fact is, Joe—"

"Why, Tom," interrupted his sister. "Surely, *yours* is not all gone."

"Every cent," said Tom, thinking that he would take a different course from that he had first proposed to himself, and make the case as bad as possible, though holding out a prospect of speedy repayment. "Dead broke—upon my honor, Joe, but I've written home for more. That is, I shall write to-night, and Frank Flanders owes me a part of it any way, so you need not be afraid. I wouldn't ask it of you"—he ran on eagerly, as he watched Josephine's varying face, "but our society, the Fraters you know, are going to have the hall fixed up, and we are all expected to subscribe. I must, you see, it

looks so mean not to, and if there's any thing I *do* hate, it's meanness ! ”

He was giving a beautiful example of it now, that was certain.

Josephine did not stop to think of that. She was startled at Tom's confession, that his money was all gone, and wondered how he had contrived to spend it all so soon ; in seven weeks, for she referred back to the number of compositions she had filed away that morning. And then, poor fellow, it was hard for him to be without a cent, or to be called mean, when it was owing to him too. Probably Frank Flanders had borrowed more than Tom liked to mention. However, the shoes and gloves she must have, and the bracelet clasp was a long cherished and very dear plan ; it was certainly a hard position to be placed in.

“ You see, Joe,” said Tom, reading something of this as she sat quite still for a minute, “ girls *can* be saving. They haven't the temptation to spend money that we fellows have ; it goes, nobody knows how, a shilling here, and a shilling there. One can't refuse to treat to a ride or so, where *it's expected*.

Poor Tom, caught in the snare of Public Opinion thus early.

"And then, every body likes a good generous fellow, that isn't afraid of his money."

"But they ought to like *you*," said Josephine, "not your money. Don't you think you ought to be more careful, Tom? You know what mother says."

"Oh, mother's always lecturing, I know; don't *you* begin," retorted Tom, in a surly tone.

"I don't want to lecture, brother. I'm not old enough, and don't know enough," faltered Josephine, "but it only seems to me, as if it wasn't right to get into debt, and spend money when you can't afford it, just for what people will think, and to please them."

A powerless argument, poor child, that had been used in vain to check the threatening tide of extravagance, by many a sister and wife!

"*Keep* your money yourself, then, if you want to be mean," said Tom, trying the resentful; "I don't want it! plenty of other people that are not so stingy!"

"But, brother," sobbed Josephine, fairly crying at such a burst of unkindness, when already over excited.

"You needn't distress yourself," said Tom, shaking off her hand and striding towards the window. "You will have the satisfaction of

knowing I'm cut by all the fellows, Charlie Spear and all. I wonder what he'd think of you now, praising you up, as he's always done since that day in the cars."

Josephine arrested in her tears, could not help wondering what Charlie Spear *had* said; and Tom was not slow to follow up the advantage.

"If you were only a little more accommodating, I should agree with him. I say, Joe,—you don't need them gloves just yet, you said you didn't; Charlie Spear says, your hand is the smallest hand he ever saw; his sister's are nothing to it. Couldn't you give us part, you know, two and a half say?"

Josephine had translated from the French, the fable of "the Raven, the Fox, and the Cheese," a few days before, but she did not think of it then. After all, it was helping Tom out of a scrape, and being sisterly, and then "half," she could spare half very well for a while. So her hand was smaller than Charlie Spear's sister's, she did not think he noticed it that day; and her meditations ended in going up stairs for the half-eagle; notwithstanding her first resolve, and Tom's crossness.

It was a pretty hard struggle, though, when

she came to open her work-box, and found it lying in the corner where she had first placed it, in full relief upon the blue silk lining, almost as bright as when it first came from the mint. She had denied herself many little things rather than change it; and she walked back more slowly to the parlor concealing it in the palm of her hand. Several others had come in, while she was absent, and she did not get a chance to give it to Tom until just as he was going.

“You can bring the change next time you come,” she whispered, and Tom, now radiant with amiability, really meant what he said, when he promised to do so, without fail.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DEBATING SOCIETY.

“Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth.”—PROVERBS.

THERE was an adjourned meeting of the “Fraters,” held in their reading room at the Academy building.

Party spirit ran unusually high this term ; the “Dolphins,” familiarly so called, but in reality the members of the Adelphi Literary Society, had succeeded in enlisting the most of the new comers, and the “Social Fraternity,” hitherto flourishing, found themselves in the minority. Consequently a meeting had been called, in which it had been “resolved,” that their declining state was owing principally to the shabby condition of the carpet and curtains in their room, while the Dolphins had refurnished a year before.

“Individual Societies, like nations,” said Frank Flanders, in the eloquent speech with

which he supported this resolution, "have their tides of popularity. But contrary to familiar classical authorities, we find ourselves declining when luxury diminishes, instead of when it is on the increase among us. In other words, fellow Fraters, if we would increase in numbers, in strength, in influence! if we would hurl our audacious rival from the triumphant position from which it so tauntingly derides our fallen state! however galling the admission may be to us as a purely literary and scientific association, we must sacrifice to mammon, and refurnish our classic hall."

"Bravo! bravo!" shouted Frank's party, with Charlie Spear at their head; but Charlie Spear's room-mate, with a smaller band, did not in any manner respond to this eloquent appeal.

It was supposed to be a secret session, but the watchful Dolphins, gathered in their secretary's room overhead, knew by the stamping and clapping of hands, that their recently won laurels were considered in peril by their rivals. Then came a murmur of discussion like the hum from a hive of startled bees. The Fraters were deciding upon the style of carpet, and whether the painted blinds should not be laid aside altogether, and replaced by the glories of a muslin

curtain, with a Turkey red relief; what new boy *could* resist such a combination—for as Frank Flanders said, in resuming his remarks,

“To change slightly a popular couplet, my beloved compeers—

“*Fraters*, like moths—
Are only caught by glare.”

Even the dissenting minority was caught by this suggestion. The curtains would *tell* immediately, on all strangers coming up the avenue. The rival reading rooms, originally intended as the parlor and sitting-room of the Academy, were situated on either side of the main entrance. The Dolphins, on their part, had painted blinds to exclude the vulgar gaze, and heighten curiosity,—representing the broken arches of some time-worn ruin, with what might be moss, and might be horse-hair, streaming from the top. The fraternity would have curtains, it was carried unanimously, always excepting Robert Carter, the “stupid chum” of Charlie Spear.

“Well, then,” said the last named young gentleman, briskly,—“all we have to do is to appoint the committee, make the arrangements, and send to Albany for the things—”

"Except raising the money to pay for them," suggested Carter.

"That's easy enough," said Frank Flanders, who pleaded poverty on all occasions, and was notorious for spending the money of other people.

"But what will the amount be, do you imagine?" asked Carter, paper and pencil in hand.

"Ten or fifteen dollars," said one of them at random.

"Thirty or forty," said Carter quietly; "an ingrain carpet, I suppose."

"Oh, no, let's have tapestry."

"What's tapestry? who's girl enough to know."

"What is tapestry?" said a chorus of voices.

"That stuff like a rug—thick and soft—all over flowers, and thingumbobs," explained Frank, from whom the suggestion came.

"Hurrah for tapestry!" shouted another, "down with the Dolphins, and their old ingrain."

"Yes, like our parlor carpets," said Charlie Spear.

"Ours too," said Tom Bleeker. "I go in for tapestry, and Turkey red."

“Three cheers for Turkey!” shouted noisy Joe Ferris, at his elbow.

“At midnight in his *curtained* tent,
A Turk was dreaming of the hour—”

“Turkey-red curtains *they* were, when they got through fighting and *dyeing*, any way.”

“Don’t be a goose, Joe—far-fetched—it isn’t ‘curtained’ any way, it’s ‘*guarded*.’”

“That’s what you’d better be, if you don’t want Peters insinuating his nose here,” some one called across the table to Ferris.

“Si—lence!” called Frank Flanders with a rap; “to be, or not to be—this is the question!”

“Put it then, and get done with it,” said Ferris; “I haven’t got out a line of Horace yet, and it’s past eight.”

“Very well then, gentlemen, it is moved and seconded—”

“No it *is not* seconded,” interrupted Ferris, “that’s it.”

“I second it,” said Charlie Spear. “Very well then, it is moved and seconded, that the Social Fraternity expend the balance now in treasury, and as much more as is necessary, on a new Turkey carpet, and tapestry curtains.”

"Cart before the horse, Frank!"

"Order, gentlemen! those in favor of this motion will say *I*."

"*Aye!*" rang like a volley through the room, causing consternation to the ranks of the Dolphins overhead; Carter alone was silent.

"Why don't you vote?" said Tom, jogging him with his elbow.

"I don't approve of spending every thing in carpet and curtains, when we haven't had a new book in the library, or a new magazine on the table for a year. Of course the fellows go to the Dolphins, who buy every thing and take every thing."

"Pooh! it is not *that!*" said Tom, feeling nevertheless that there might be a great deal of weight in the argument.

"Yes it is," said Carter stoutly. "Stevens and Quincy both would have joined, if we had taken Littell. Besides, we don't begin to have enough on hand."

"Well, we must raise it then!" said Tom, magnificently, fingering a vest pocket full of change as he did so.

"Not so easy," objected the other. "I can't subscribe a dime."

"Why?" asked Tom.

“Because I haven’t got it, and can’t get it, that’s all. Father has hard work enough to pay my bills as it is.”

He gave his explanation in a simple, straightforward way, neither hesitating nor with assumed carelessness. Tom could not understand any one who would so deliberately own to straitened means, and keep within their limits ; but he felt a new respect towards Carter from that moment ; he knew that in such moral courage he was entirely wanting. Frank Flanders was always complaining of poverty, but that was a different thing, a “get off,” as Ferris said, when he knew he was sure to be invited at the expense of some one else, for his jokes, and his stories.

The Social Fraternity had risen in their own estimation by the mere vote. The Dolphins plotted counter measures among themselves, instead of attending to the regular debates at their next meeting. Boys that declined joining either of these ambitious associations, were drawn in. “BRIBERY AND CORRUPTION !” was found chalked in large, straggling capitals, on the door of the Fraters’ reading-room ; even the teachers were interested, and more honorary members were elected, than ever were heard of

at Yale or Harvard. The Fraternity held mysterious consultations in the corridor, which were suddenly broken off, if a Dolphin appeared in view. They received important-looking despatches from Albany; and returned immediate replies, writing "In Haste!" all over the yellow envelopes, which were sealed with the large seal of the Society, two hands in the most inseparable grasp—on which a very unnecessary amount of scarlet sealing-wax was wasted.

Tom Bleeker, as the head of the committee, was perpetually drawing up some communication or report from the inner pocket of his roundabout, and making numberless demonstrations in class, on the cover of his Euclid, which were entirely foreign to those propounded by Mr. Peters.

To be sure, he thought now and then with an uncomfortable twinge, that he had pledged himself as one of five to pay all that was due over the cash on hand, and the voluntary subscriptions. He hesitated to do this, it is true, but Charlie Spear reminded him, that as the head of the committee, it was expected of him, particularly as every body knew that he had the richest father of any boy in school. To which Joe Ferris added, "Fact, Tom! I only wish

this child could say so ; every body knows that you have more pocket-money than any two fellows among us, except Charlie boy, who carries California somewhere about him ;” — which speech was finished by a friendly and admiring thump on Tom’s back, which convinced him that there was “ no way to get out from it.”

The bill at Kelly’s was not yet settled, and had been increased by sundry rides and drives on holiday afternoons. Then there was another at “ Barker’s,” the village store, for “ extras,” commenced by sending jointly with some of the others for “ crackers and cheese,”—as all miscellaneous eatables were entitled by them, which were procured in his name ; and he had found it convenient to add one or two items before the second half-eagle was changed, promising himself not to let it amount to more than half a dollar, though he kept no record of it. He did not dare now to ask Charlie Spear about “ that little account,” no longer small, and Charlie was not the only one who had been glad to oblige “ such a clever, flush fellow, as Tom Bleeker.”

Then, too, as his popularity and consequence increased with the boys, it lessened with his teachers, for a mind so ill at ease was not clear enough to apply to his tasks as he once had

done. Tom liked any society better than his own, and escaped from it as much as possible. Even in study hours, when he was compelled "to stay at home with himself," he managed to escape from uncomfortable reflections by reading some trashy, worthless, and even hurtful tale, procured by stealth, and read against the rules, while a thick cloud of dust settled on the Bible, which he had been so proud to possess scarcely a year before, and hurried prayers were often entirely omitted. This, which seemed the end of misdoing, was, in truth, its very commencement. He had put out "the lamp of his guidance, and his feet had stumbled upon the dark mountains."

CHAPTER IX.

THE TEMPTATION.

"Wisdom is better than rubies."—PROVERBS.

"Tom hasn't been down here in an age," said Clementina to her room-mate, one afternoon.

"I know it," said Josephine. "I was just thinking of it. "Besides—" but she checked herself just as she was going to add, "he hasn't given me that change yet, and I must have my gloves before next Sunday."

"What?" asked Clem. "Besides what?"

"Oh, nothing," said Josephine, still meditating uncomfortably on the large hole past drawing together in one of her best pair.

"I guess he'll be here to-morrow," continued Clementina. "He's not sick, for he was at church Sunday, you know. I wouldn't care, if I was you."

"Oh, I don't;" said Josephine, shrugging

her shoulders slightly. "It's not that. Do you know your part, Clem? for it's most time for a rehearsal."

"Most. Let me see; we come in where Marianne says, 'These are my jewels!'—no, I come in first, and carry off the children when Livia arrives; Ellen Hadly, you know. It was very good in Marianne to choose us, when we have been in so often. You announce Livia, don't you? We haven't much to say, for that matter."

"It's a very pretty dress, though I don't suppose Roman slaves really did wear white dresses, and blue sashes—do you?"

"Oh, we are captives, of course, and were the daughters of a Nubian Prince, in our own country."

"Goodness! Clem,—Nubians are black. Oh, well—some prince or other—come, let's go," and the room-mates betook themselves to one of the smaller recitation rooms accordingly.

"Dialogues," as they called them, were among the principal recreations at Rockville Seminary. They were in reality scenes from real life, or from ancient or modern history, with dialogues to suit the characters, which were spoken by the young ladies. The writers were

selected from among the older girls, who usually chose the other speakers. It was quite an honor to be chosen, among the younger girls, who were ambitious candidates accordingly. This plan of dialogues, much like the acted charades, since so common, was considered by Miss Anthon an excellent exercise both in composition and speaking, and she was usually at the rehearsals, to suggest alteration and improvement.

"Now," said Marianne Fanshaw, "here we all are, except the children, and Mrs. Platt; we are going to borrow hers, girls—will bring them in as soon as their faces are washed. I am Cornelia, you know, and Ellen is Livia, a noble lady come to pay me a call."

"Clem, don't giggle when you come in after the little Platts, or you'll spoil every thing," added Ellen, to this explanation. "You know you did last time you were on a dialogue, just when Maria told you your father was dead, and you were an orphan."

"But she looked so ridiculous," said Clem, laughing at the recollection of Maria Allen's round, rosy face in a widow's cap, with a stiff white paper border.

"Hush," said Marianne. "Now, I'm Cornelia, you know, and sit here in my white

wrapper, with a girdle, that is the leather belt and buckle of my riding habit, and my hair in a high braid, coming around, *so*. The little Platts are playing at my feet. Joe appears to announce Livia, and Clem comes in to carry them off."

"But if she sees them when she comes, what is the use of bringing them back again?" asked Maria Allen.

"Oh, never mind," said Marianne, good-naturedly. "They're not supposed to be dressed for company. The girls have so little to do, I thought I'd let them come in as often as possible. Joe, I guess you'd better kneel when you offer the tray of 'conserves, sweet and scented wines,'" quoted Miss Fanshaw, from her manuscript. "It will have a very good effect. But, come, let's begin. Enter, Livia." Whereupon, Ellen Hadly emerged from behind a black-board, carrying herself in a stiff, affected manner, which was intended for stateliness, while Marianne leaned on a desk in a pensive attitude, supposed to be watching the gambols of the little Platts on the floor. On this occasion, the entire glory of authorship was due to Ellen.

The "Good morrow, lovely lady!" and "Thrice welcome, noble dame!" of the saluta-

tion, hushed the audience into attention, and the rehearsal proceeded with unusual success, to Livia's inquiry,

"What games are now in vogue, to make the tardy hours more quickly pass? What new intrigues at court?—"

"Or, in the common language of morning calls, what's the news?" interrupted Maria Allen.

"Hush!" said Marianne, "now here's my great speech."

"Yes, much is even now transpiring, though, to a stranger's eye, it may seem dull."

"Very!" whispered Maria, audibly.

Marianne composed her face once more "after the high Roman fashion," and continued:

"New games are every day invented to please the vitiated taste of petty tribunes and of courtiers vile, who taint the very air we breathe with their base flatteries."

"Ahem!" coughed one of the audience, which produced a deprecating, "Oh, please," from the speaker.

"I love not scenes like these! yet 'twas this morn I visited the Circus, to please my noble Lord. Twice, and high the combat rose, between a proud Numidian lion, and a man whose noble air sat ill beneath the tunic vile he wore.

I watched him, for it seemed to me, I'd met his glance in other days,—and when at last he rose victorious from the combat, and shook aloft his gleaming spear, wet with the life-blood of his adversary,—I recognized in that bowed form, one, who but a few short years ago, stood proudest in the Forum.”

Marianne sighed profoundly, and hung her head, like a child convicted of naughtiness, while Ellen gave a tragic start forward, exclaiming :

“ His name ? ”

“ It matters not,” said Marianne, reviving a little. “ Yet there I read a lesson on what *men* call glory. As I said, a few short years ago, he stood the proudest, midst the nobles of our land ; and multitudes entranced, stood listening to the burning words that flowed as a resistless torrent from his tongue.”

“ Oh, what a fall was there ! ” exclaimed Maria, pathetically. “ Livia, you don't roll up your eyes enough,” while Livia proceeded :

“ Aha ! I knew him well ! 'Twas Glacus Cassius ! none other stood so high. *Was this* his fate ? A star indeed has fallen from the firmament ! (sighs.) Methinks e'en yet I see

his ivory fingers, flashing with the mingled gleam of pearl and diamond clear ! ”

“ Livia dotes on jewelry, doesn’t she,” said one of the girls.

“ That’s her part, you know,” exclaimed Josephine ; “ listen, now Marianne has to ask her about her husband.”

“ Rather late in the day,” said Ellen Hadly’s sister. “ People generally do that to begin with. My dear Mrs. Jones ! delighted to see you ; how are the children ? how *is* Mr. Jones ? though they never wait to hear the answer. But, where are they ? Oh, Mr. ‘ Livia,’ or ‘ Fabius,’ or ‘ Valerius,’ or whatever her husband’s name is, has given her a ring, and she’s showing it.”

Here Marianne goes in ecstasies. “ Most beautiful ! ”

Livia : “ And see this bright and curious jewel. Are not these diamonds clear ?—(showing her bracelets)—and have you aught to be compared to this ? ”

“ Cool in ‘ Mrs. Livia,’ ” whispered Maria Allen.

“ S—h, she hasn’t finished,” said Clementina.

“ Now I bethink me, I would see *thy* caskets,

for no doubt thou'st many bright and curious gems, gifts of thy noble Septimus."

Clementina at this juncture departed to hurry the ablutions of the borrowed Platt children, and the noble Cornelia having proceeded with the statement—

"Bright jewels, true, I have," paused to listen for the scuffling of the unwilling little feet in the hall; being reassured by a glimpse of calico pantalets on the piazza, she raised her finger with,—

"But, hark! I hear my children's voices."

Enter Clementina, dragging the youngest Platt, and promising the eldest candy, as she hurried them in. Marianne, or rather Cornelia, captured a hand of each and led them forward.

"*These are my jewels*, these the precious gems that long shall sparkle on my crown of fame. I ask no richer treasure, seek no other boon than their sweet guileless love!"

While Ellen, caressing one of the sunburnt little heads, tried to make herself heard above the chorus of laughter, exclaiming,

"And bright ones, truly; *this* is a little faithful copy of his sire—"

"Where did you ever see him?" asked, Maria. "Their sire—"

“Bright ones, truly!” laughed another, “but a little polishing would not hurt them,” and so the rehearsal broke up in a little hubbub of criticism, laughter, and applause.

The speakers themselves adjourned to Marianne Fanshaw’s room, or rather Miss Bailey’s, who was absent, and Ann Brown sat sewing quietly and very much at home by the window. Clementina and Josephine exchanged glances. Ellen Hadly nodded carelessly, and went on with what she was saying.

“How are you going to manage with those little Platts, any way?”

“That’s easy enough—some white tunics made out of an old skirt or something.”

“I’ll trim them with some worsted braid,” said Ann.

“Thank you,” said Marianne, in a friendly, almost affectionate tone. “That’s a good child, if you’re not too busy.”

Miss Brown was certainly plain and awkward usually, but here, where she felt quite at home, and sure of being welcome, there was less restraint than usual in her manner. “She certainly has very good eyes,” thought Josephine, as she sat watching her, “and her hair is very thick and long, only it is put up so horridly!”

and then she looked at Ann's hands, which were large, and far from delicate, showing that she had always been accustomed to use them unsparingly. And so she had ; as the eldest daughter of a poor man, she had made, mended and *washed* for the little ones ; and now she was struggling to gain an education, that she might teach them as well, aided by the kindness of Miss Anthon and other friends, who, like Marianne Fanshaw, recognized a noble heart and mind beneath the plain exterior and poor apparel.

"What are *you* going to wear ?" asked Marianne of Ellen. "Oh, I have that jewelry here now ; you wanted one of my bracelets."

"Why, yes, as I'm supposed to be covered with trinkets. I have Maria's, and our Jenny's ; I would like your cameo. Marianne, I think you are the most fortunate girl I know."

"How so, Ellen ?"

"Why, to have such lots of things ; most of us girls are contented with a brooch, and a ring, or a bracelet at least ; there's nobody but you in school has a whole set, and you have both turquoise and coral."

Marianne had unlocked a dark brass-mounted dressing-case, and taken out the tray. There

were several little white and green paper boxes, such as ornaments often come in, and two large morocco cases besides.

Josephine and Clementina both crowded forward to look and admire.

“Are *all* those yours, Marianne ?”

“Yes,” said she, quietly, and a little sadly, they thought. She had been too young when her mother died to recollect her, but she never saw those morocco cases, which would not have been hers but for that loss, without thinking that she was motherless, and longing for the love and sympathy, which she saw others receive.

“Would you mind opening them ?” asked Josephine, who “doted on jewelry” quite as much as the lady Livia.

“No, not at all ;” and she unclasped the cases, and displayed the rich, but old-fashioned ornaments, on their velvet beds.

Josephine looked with greedy eyes, and Clementina was so rude as to say, “they were nothing to *her* mother’s ornaments.”

“I wonder you don’t wear more jewelry,” said Josephine, as Marianne laid out what had been purchased and presented to her, for Ellen to choose from.

“I don’t think I care for it particularly ; I’d

rather have a knot of ribbon any day ; I think it looks more simple and girlish ; or velvet bands for my neck and wrists, such as Ann wears."

She said this for the sake of drawing Ann into the conversation, or at least to let her see that she was not forgotten, while others were attended to. In this she was unlike many rich and fashionable ladies we have met, who slight and neglect people they condescend to entertain alone, when others of a gayer set are present. But this was not according to Marianne's one golden rule of ladyhood, by which she did all things habitually. She had given Ann the velvet ribbon, and made it up for her, though she did not think it was necessary to speak of it : many would have said " such as *I gave Ann.*"

" What a sweet ring ! " said Josephine, opening a little box that held this ring alone. " May I take it out ? Oh, how little it is ! it would just fit me."

" Try it on, if you like," said Marianne good-naturedly, for she saw Josephine longing to do so. " I had it when I was about your age. Yes, I think that ring would do better than the one you have already, Ellen ; it is larger, and would make more show."

She spoke now of a blood-stone seal, Ellen had discovered, and which she wanted to wear in the dialogue. Josephine replaced the case on the box, and put the ring on her forefinger. It was a golden circlet, with five pearls, enclosing a small ruby, and did fit her, though it was rather loose. Josephine held out her hand admiringly, for by this time you have no doubt discovered that her hands were her chief vanity. Some one had told her that a small hand was the mark of "a born lady"—and from that time she had measured every body by this standard. Marianne's hands were larger, but soft and white, and well formed. Clementina had short, thick fingers; Ann Brown's no pretensions at all, as she looked around the room; and Ellen Hadly's, like Ellen herself, had no special claims, one way or the other.

"It's a shame, this doesn't belong to me," thought Josephine, returning to the ring, and the hand that wore it, with renewed admiration. "It sets off my hand beautifully, and Marianne never wears it. I should think she might give it to me, or let me wear it a little while any way; I would be as careful as possible. Ellen borrows the girls' things, and so does Maria. I wonder why mamma told me not to; I do think

my mother is the most particular woman that ever lived and breathed."

It was getting dark in the room, but there was a wood fire, that glowed and flashed upon the group around the table. Ellen and Marianne, still busy with the ornaments, replacing them now,—and Clementina, leaning over the table with both elbows on it, and her chin in her hands, a favorite position with Miss Jones, was idly watching them. Ann had found it too dusky for her sewing, and sat with it in her lap, looking into the pleasant wood fire, and castle-building, no doubt.

"I wonder if Marianne remembers that I have it," flashed through Josephine's thoughts directly. "If she doesn't, there would be no harm in wearing it just to-morrow, for Tom will be sure to come, and who knows but Charlie Spear or some of them may call for him, and I can always go to the door to see him off! It is perfectly lovely. I don't believe Marianne would care; and if I wear it off without saying a word, it wouldn't be borrowing it!"

She looked almost stealthily around the room again. All was as before, and Marianne had forgotten about it, for she had replaced the

empty box, and was just closing the dressing-case.

“What difference does it make?” whispered the Temptation to Josephine, again. “Marianne would not mind if she did know, I don’t believe; only if I tell her, that would be borrowing, and I will return it all safe and sound Monday, before school.”

The golden band, and the pearls, were very fascinating on that half-extended forefinger, and, as Marianne turned the key of the dressing-case with a snap, Clementina, suddenly recollecting a half-finished story, called her away. She bade Marianne a hurried good-by, and the next minute was going down Poverty Lane with the ring on her hand, but unnoticed by Clementina in the darkness.

CHAPTER X.

CONCEALMENT.

“The wicked flee when no man pursueth.”—PROVERBS.

It could not be always dark, and Clementina would be sure to see the ring ! This was the first uncomfortable reflection as they reached their own room. “Where would be the best place to put it ?” thought Josephine, with sudden recollection of any spot which was not considered common property.

• She could not get at her trunk without exciting too much attention, for it was empty, Clementina knew as well as herself, and had the close chintz cover besides. There was her writing desk, but she had unfortunately lost the key. Her workbox was so small that it could be lifted and carried away almost as easily as a ring, if any one was inclined to steal it. For the first time, thoughts of thieves intruded themselves.

Such a thing had never been heard of at Rockville. Even the teachers did not lock their drawers, or doors, as there were no servants to lead into temptation, and no one had access to the main building but those in whose honesty they had the most implicit confidence. But nothing else was at hand, and under pretence of replacing a spool, though she might have opened her box twenty times, without being particularly noticed,—the ring was put under a roll of tape, and Josephine went down to tea. The necessity she felt of making an excuse about the spool, might have shown her that she was in fault ; but having once done wrong she would not stop to think. Several of the girls noticed what excellent spirits Josephine seemed to be in, at the tea table, and how pretty she looked, for her cheeks were flushed, her eyes unusually bright, and she talked incessantly. But she heard every step that sounded across the piazza, with an inward fear of robbery, and avoided meeting Marianne's eye, every time she spoke to her. She began to wish the ring safe back in its place, but it would be so mortifying to own that she had taken it, without having the pleasure of wearing it once, at least.

When they left the dining-room, Josephine

pushed by every one, and hurried up stairs to raise the box cover with fear and trembling. The ring was there, safe, and more beautiful than ever, in her eyes. She would not return it just then ; Marianne *might* be displeased, after all, and she would have some pleasure from it, having risked so much. So she sat down to her lessons, still keeping the box in sight, lest Clementina should take a fancy to help herself to a string, or button, as she often did.

“So far so good,” thought she, as they blew out the light, and jumped into bed without any discoveries ; but though Josephine usually fell asleep only too easily to suit Clementina, who liked to talk, it was in vain now that she attempted to forget herself. She shook up her pillow to no purpose, and settled herself in her favorite position. The workbox stood on the table alarmingly near the window. How easily any one could raise the sash and carry it off ! She had a great mind to get up and put it on ; but then Clem might wake first, and see it. Finally, after a great many plans and suggestions, she waited until Clementina was sound asleep, and, making as little noise as she could, stepped out of bed, and put the box under her pillow. But if she turned in the night, the box

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might fall out, and betray her by the noise ! if she pushed it further along, it would be too near Clementina ! Finally, she raised one corner of the mattress as carefully as she could, watching the sleeper's face every instant, in the misty light of the faint, new moon.

Clementina, having no ring on her conscience, slept through these various manœuvres, and Josephine tried to compose herself once more. The box underneath did not add to the softness of her pillow, and her sleep, when sleep came, was disturbed by restless dreams, in which the little Platts, Livia and her jewels, were mingled in the most fantastic and uncomfortable manner.

The dialogue was to be spoken in the last morning hour, instead of the usual reading aloud of the best composition from each class. Josephine wondered to find how little interest she had in it now. Usually, the girls selected in this way were excused from one or two lessons, and had access to the teachers at any hour, for counsel in any unexpected emergency. Josephine chose to practise, as usual, though she had an *arpeggio* lesson, which she particularly disliked, leaving the others to arrange the drugget, which served as a carpet, the couch

and the marble-topped centre table, which were to represent the morning room of "Cornelia," at one end of the drawing hall.

She knew Marianne would be there, and, instead of seeking her society as she had always done before, she avoided every possible encounter, and when finally summoned to dress for her part, took care not to arrive until she was sure that "Cornelia" had taken up her position. The Dialogue passed off very prosperously ; the audience being disposed favorably, and overlooking any little discrepancies in scenery or costume, in the most charitable manner. At any other time, Josephine would have lingered to catch any criticism on herself or others, but now she slipped away unnoticed to open the box, and assure herself, once more, of the safety of her troublesome possession.

"Tom *must* come this afternoon," she thought, as, locking the door, and drawing the curtain, she indulged herself in trying it on once more. "I shall wear my stone-colored cashmere, and my scarlet sacque, down to the parlor, and perhaps Miss Anthon will allow him to walk with me when I go to the store for my gloves. Gloves I must have, that's certain. These are forlorn !"

But in vain was the careful toilette, the nicely braided hair, the ring itself, which, gaining courage from Marianne's silence, and Clem's preoccupation, she ventured at last to put on, taking the precaution, however, to wear the pearls inside, so as to make the narrow gold band scarcely noticeable, though it could be turned to display them fully on her way down stairs, if Tom and his friends did come.

"Are you sure no one has been here for me?" she asked, more than once, of the mistress, and finally she became so restless, and really uneasy, for she depended on having her gloves to wear the next day, and needed some new drawing-pencils badly, that she took her book, and sat down by the hall window, which commanded a view of the Academy road, to watch for herself.

The afternoon dragged on, and she sat there, cold and uncomfortable, besides "missing a great deal of fun," as Clementina assured her, in their own room, where their own set had gathered. She strained her eyes to watch every figure appearing in the distance, only to meet with a fresh disappointment as it came nearer. It seemed as if every body was called for but her. She could hear the laughing and talking in the

parlor, and the bell ringing every ten minutes, but no one said, "Is Miss Bleeker in?" and she had no right to join them. Then she began to wonder if she had offended Tom,—and she thought over every thing she had said the last time they met. But that was not it,—Tom shunned *her*, as she shunned Marianne, and grew more miserable and reckless every day.

In their city home, a mother prayed that her absent children might be "shielded from temptation,"—but sometimes this prayer, of all others, seems denied, and our dear ones are suffered to be taken in the snare, that they may be more watchful for the future, and learn where to apply for help, when they at length come to ask, "deliver us from evil."

Mrs. Bleeker, still careful and troubled, often rested in the thought that two of her children were surrounded by good influences, and spared the annoyances which daily increased at home. Their letters, so childishly full of their own plans and occupations, were among her chief pleasures, and if she noticed that Tom's were briefer and more irregular than usual, it was only to think that he was making the most of advantages which might not be long continued to him, and had not time, as of old.

The twilight deepened into evening, and Josephine reluctantly gave up all hope. She really wanted to see Tom. She felt more lonely and homesick than she had done before, since vacation ; every thing seemed to trouble her, and disappoint her. When older people find this depression creeping over them, they know from past experience, some act or wish of their own is in a great measure the cause. Josephine had never experienced it before, and thought it was all owing to her disappointment of the afternoon, as she undressed, and threw herself wearily on the bed, the instant the bell rang for study hours to be over. Clementina had gone into one of the other rooms to hear the conclusion of one of the afternoon's jokes, and at last, in fear of her return, she forced herself to rise, rearrange the workbox with its concealed treasure, and pretended to be asleep when her room-mate returned, to avoid the chatter she was sure, otherwise, to have to listen to.

The next morning was cold and cheerless. The sky had a dull, leaden, immovable tinge. It was late in the season for a heavy storm, yet every one prophesied "snow," as they opened their windows, for the prescribed airing of rooms. Josephine fretfully declared it could not be. If

they went to church she should get a glimpse of Tom, and perhaps be able to speak to him. Besides, she had no overshoes yet, and her thick boots were giving out.

“She *hated* snow, and sloppy weather. She did not see what in the world it wanted to snow for at this season of the year, the second week in March ! ”

“Come and see for yourself, then ! ” said Clementina, quite as crossly, for she thought Josephine had been particularly “poky and disagreeable” the last day or two.

Her own window gave the best view of the sky, and determined not to make the threatening clouds snow, Josephine went slowly towards it. Both the girls were dressed for church. Clementina wore a broadcloth Talma cloak, the only one in school, and prided herself on introducing it accordingly. She had pretty chinchilla furs besides, a muff, and victorine. Josephine’s bright-colored highland shawl, fell in soft warm folds around her, and she too had a muff, of less expensive fur, white and black, but still neat and comfortable. Their bonnets were laid out on the bed, ready to put on at a moment’s notice.

“I don’t believe it’s snow. There, I told

you so—it's raining now!" and she stretched out her ungloved hand, on which she had just put the ring for safe-keeping in her absence from the house, to catch the drops she imagined were falling.

An instant more, and she had drawn it back, with a clutch and a cry. The ring was gone! it had fallen from her finger, and she saw it dropping through the air, down, down, out of reach, out of sight even, as it struck a stone, and glanced away under the crisp, sere autumn leaves, that the wind had heaped beneath the window.

Gone, beyond her reach! and Clementina stood there, wondering at her strange cry and sudden paleness.

Her first impulse to rush away along the hall, down the piazza, had to be restrained. The inexorable bell was already ringing for them to assemble in the great hall, and the bright, young faces of her school-mates were looking in at the door, as they passed. Clementina, forgetting her momentary astonishment, hurried on her bonnet, and was soon absorbed in tying the strings into the exact bow, which alone she considered presentable. Josephine, stunned, and heart-sick, followed her from the room,

hoping even yet to slip away to the garden. The line was already formed, and passing out of the front door, two by two ; she was obliged to fall into her place, and follow Miss Anthon up the village street, and to her own place in the great Seminary pew, full of this new calamity, and with a harrowing uncertainty, as to the fate of the coveted, but treacherous ring.

From her corner, by Miss Bailey, she saw, to her dismay, the snow-flakes begin to fall, and settle on the window-ledge, as if it was something more than what the villagers called "a flurry."

She felt that it was wicked to let her thoughts wander so in church, and tried again and again to fix them on the service, but they would fly back to her troubles, and endless planning to find her way out of them.

She was noted in the class-book of the mistress as inattentive, but she could not help it. She was scarcely conscious of her own restless movements.

Tom was there, so he was not sick, but Tom in Mr. Peter's train was as inaccessible to a Seminary girl, as if he had been shut up in the Arctic regions with Sir John Franklin. The

Academy students were marched down one aisle, and turned to the left ; the Seminary troop walked down the other, turning to the right. A nod in the vestibule was all the consolation Josephine gained from the sight of her brother ; as they were detained by the raising of umbrellas, and adjusting cloaks and shawls, to meet the storm by people in the doorway.

There was no disputing it now, Josephine saw with a shiver, as their turn came. The snow covered the ground as in mid-winter, and was falling soft, and mute, and thickly still. To those who were prepared to meet it, it was a pleasant and healthful thing, battling through the storm, the little way they had to walk ; and they came in with faces glowing from the wind and drifting snow. But Josephine had no overshoes, her feet were chilled, and she could not laugh with the rest at the powdered hair, which had suddenly come into fashion. There was no getting into the garden then, for she saw the snow had drifted across the gate.

Of course there was no going out again in the afternoon, and Josephine found it wretched, with a book in her hand which she did not read, her Sunday duties neglected, and her spirits as chilled and miserable, as the poor little snow-

birds hopping about out of doors. The storm ended in rain and sleet, towards night fall, as spring storms oftendo; and the last time Josephine looked despairingly out of the window, she saw the clouds breaking away, and drifting in heavy masses across the rising moon. A bitter wind tossed the great pine trees of the wood across the common, bowing and swaying, with a melancholy surging music, like a loud organ strain from some vast instrument. Black shadows trooped across the snowy plain, crested with sleet, and down in the garden, where bare fruit trees and ice-bound shrubbery bent to the wind. There was a wild beauty in the night, which Josephine felt, as she lingered over the dreary view; but her room-mate could not comprehend it, and wondered what she could see, such a dark dismal evening, to keep her standing there so long. Clementina pulled up the blankets, and sank slowly into a delightful nap, the warmth of the room and bed contrasting with the dreariness without, and the last time her eyes languidly opened, Josephine was standing there still—not yet undressed, though the light had been put out long before, when the bell rang, the fire was going down, and the room getting colder every minute.

A sudden project had come into Josephine's mind, as she looked down into the garden, and wondered where, beneath this great white covering, the ring was hidden. The snow might melt very slowly, and the ring would be ruined, or perhaps found and stolen before she could get an opportunity to search for it. Marianne would discover its absence, and there would be the shame and mortification of a public reprimand, perhaps.

But the ring *must* be there—there within her reach, if she knew the precise spot whence it had rolled, as she was almost certain she did. It could not have gone farther than the roots of the great sweetbrier ; and as she thought of it, she imagined she had seen it arrested there ; that she could almost see it now, sparkling beneath the snow.

She drew a short, quick breath, and looked into the room. Clementina's round, careless face, lay upon the pillow, in the full repose of a first sound sleep. How she envied it, as she listened to the deep, regular breathing ! It seemed so long since she had been tempted to take the ring—almost like years, instead of days. Oh, if she had never seen it, or if she could but hold it in her hand once more, as she

had done that morning, and so go to Marianne with a free and full confession of her fault.

All over the large building silence and darkness had fallen. The last round of the monitress had been taken, the lights died out one by one from the teachers' rooms, looking on to the play ground. Three hours before, Mrs. Platt had deposited the juveniles in their trundle bed, and herself on the cot, in the little room off the kitchen. What should she be afraid of?

Josephine did not stop to hesitate longer, lest her forced courage should desert her. She knew that the outer door of the corridor was locked by the monitress, who kept the key, but Clementina's window opened on the piazza, or rather gallery, from which a flight of stairs led to the play ground. If she could but snap the bolt, and raise the sash without awaking her!

She tried it first, and was successful. The cold night air rushed in; Clementina only stirred, and turned as it touched her face, then breathed as regularly as before; a woollen shawl lay on the chair, and wrapping it about her, the venturesome girl climbed out upon the piazza.

How like a guilty creature she felt, as she stole along under the windows, and crept down stairs, starting at the creak of a board, or the

flapping of an unfastened shutter. But no window opened, no voice challenged her, and by the obscured moonlight she gained the garden safely. The crust was not sufficiently strong to bear her in many places ; but that was a little thing—the cold wet snow in which she sank, when it gave way with a crackling sound. She reached the sweetbrier at last, but the snow had drifted heavily around it ; and she had to look for a broken branch to aid her search. All in vain, she worked with almost frantic eagerness ; no trace, no clue. If she only knew just where to remove the snow, but it was so hopeless to be groping there with benumbed feet and hands, when she might be yards from the spot.

Suddenly the moon shone out, with a wan and ghastly light, on the snow, on the pine trees writhing in the wind, on the tall, spectral building before her, with its numberless windows, like so many curious eyes, fastened upon her movements. A watch dog, somewhere between her and the wood, he might be crouching under the very wall ready to spring upon her as she paused, commenced baying at the moon, a long, low, melancholy whine, interrupted by fierce short barks, from some fellow guardian of the night ; and with the sound, and the sense of the

stillness around her, as she raised her head and held her breath to listen, the loneliness, and perhaps danger of her position flashed over her with a great and sudden fear, that scarcely gave her strength to fly.

She never clearly remembered how she gained her own room again ; it was all a maze of horror, like one struggling to walk in a dream, and pursued by phantoms. But she stood there, trembling, her limbs failing beneath her, her very blood benumbed with cold and terror, and her clothes clinging chill and damp about her feet. She crouched down on the floor by the unconscious sleeper, not daring to close the window, or to undress for a long, long time ; and then she darted across the room, did what must be done without daring to look over her shoulder, and shrank, shivering and trembling into bed.

CHAPTER XI.

A TRUE FRIEND.

"Open rebuke is better than secret love."

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend."—PROVERBS.

"CLEAR across the gallery ! You don't say so !" exclaimed Clementina, raising her hands, as she stood in the midst of the group, that always gathered around the stove before morning prayers.

"Yes," said one of the girls, "and Miss Anthon thinks some of the things are taken from the wardrobe closet in our hall, but she hasn't had time to look thoroughly, yet."

"I heard a tremendous noise," said Agnes Hadly. "Didn't we, Ellen ? like forty men tramping past the window."

"Pooh ! you always hear wonders," said Ellen, contemptuously. "I didn't hear a sound."

"There's tracks all through the garden," continued the principal informant. "They must have been prowling round."

"Who?" asked Josephine, who had just come down wrapped up in a shawl, and shivering, as she tried to get close to the stove.

"Thieves! my dear, haven't you heard? Mercy! what's the matter, Joe? you're as white as a ghost, and have great black circles around your eyes!"

"Nothing," said Joe shortly; "I wish people would let me alone."

"I've got a horrid sore throat," said Clementina; "where I got it I can't imagine, unless coming home in the snow, yesterday."

"Of course that was it," Josephine said, in the same unpleasant tone. "I wonder we did not all get our deaths!"

"Do you know," interrupted Agnes Hadly, still full of the grand discovery of the morning, "I imagined I heard a window shut down, somewhere along Poverty Lane? though I suppose it *is* all imagination, according to Ellen."

"You always were frightened at your shadow," said her sister, graciously.

"Well, Mrs. Platt says she heard the dogs bark a great deal, and there's the track; see for yourself."

Josephine had not thought of this. How guilty and miserable she felt as she sat there

among them ; her feet like ice, though she had them on the stove hearth, her hands dry and burning.

• The story of the robbing at the Seminary, though nobody could tell exactly what was taken, spread through the village, notwithstanding Miss Anthon did her best to prevent it. It had originated with Mrs. Platt, who being up very early, saw the track of feet, though the crust had been broken so irregularly, that it was impossible to tell whether the intruder was man or boy. Mrs. Platt rushed to Miss Anthon in her night-dress, and begged "that the constable should be sent for immediately, and thought they should have a dog held by an iron chain at each door, and wouldn't Miss Anthon look in the store room, and see if that last barrel of flour was safe !" So it had been talked over among the boarders, and been carried home by the day-scholars.

Tom Bleeker heard it at the post-office on Wednesday evening. It was his turn to carry the mail bag from the Academy, and to bring back the letters and papers for the students.

So "whistling as he went"—not for want of thought, but to drive it out of his mind, if possible, as he passed the Seminary in spite of

himself, the recollection of poor Joe's sad face on Sunday, and how shamefully he had used her, about spending her money, and keeping away from her so ; would intrude ;—he had reached the pine woods, and resolving all sorts of virtuous conduct for the future, when some one sprang up suddenly from the shelter of the fence, and caught his arm.

Tom was no coward ; but a thought of all the tales of witches he had ever heard came into his mind, as he shook the grasp of the unknown's hand off of his arm, and ejaculated, " Who are you ? "

" It's me—Josephine ! Oh, Tom, I must speak to you ! " said a frightened voice from under the queer-looking hood. " Why haven't you been to see me ?—why haven't you brought me my money ? I *must* have the money—all of it, I want it now. Hasn't father sent you any yet ? "

" No," said Tom, in a surly tone, provoked at being so openly " dunned "—as he called it. " What are you doing out here, this time of night, and thieves around too ? "

" There are no thieves, it was me—I went to hunt for the ring—Marianne's ring ; I took it without telling her, and I've looked and looked,

every chance I could get, and now the snow is melting so fast, and it is not there. It must have rolled down that great hole the moles made last year, don't you remember? such an elegant ring! and I must buy her another, and so I *must* have the money, Tom—won't you get it for me?"

"Where do you suppose I'm going to get it? Money doesn't grow in Rockville."

"Don't speak so cross! dear, dear Tom. I'm *so unhappy*; I have not slept for three nights, and every body suspects me. Ann Brown must have seen me take it, she looks at me so! I hate her worse than ever, and Marianne avoids me! Oh, what *shall* I do? Can't you get me the money, Tom? don't say no! Frank Flanders owes you, you said so."

"Not half so much as I owe Charlie Spear, and half a dozen other boys! There's no use teasing a fellow's life out, when it's an impossibility."

"But it's *mine*, Tom," urged the excited girl—"mother gave it to *me*!"

"And you've lent it, and I've spent it," said Tom, attempting a laugh.

"What shall I do?" said his sister again, pulling nervously at the corner of her shawl.

"If I could earn it any way, I would never ask you for it again. I would sit up all night to earn it, if I only knew how. Can't you help me?"

"It was very foolish of you to borrow the ring, any way," said Tom, glad to lose sight of his own misdemeanors, as many a one had done before him, in lecturing some one else for theirs.

"But I *didn't* borrow it—you don't understand! I took it without saying any thing to Marianne; I thought she would not care, and I meant to give it back to her, right away."

"So much the worse," said Tom, with a burst of virtuous indignation. "I never thought a sister of mine would steal!"

But Josephine, crying violently now, between excitement and disappointment, did not retort, as she might have done.

"Write to mother for it," suggested Tom, presently.

"I don't dare to," sobbed Josephine. "She told me so often that was every cent she could spare, and I should have to say I lent it to you, you know, Tom."

"Let her think you've spent it."

Oh, Tom! Tom! counselling a sister to

falsehood, and to conceal your fault ; what a change wrong doing has indeed wrought.

Josephine, absorbed in her own anxiety, noticed only the implied self-condemnation. She could not do herself injustice, and shook her head.

“Well, I can’t stay here all night !” said Tom, shouldering the mail bag which he had rested on the stump of a tree. “It will make a sweet story as it is, if any one has seen us ; they wouldn’t know it was me.”

“What else could I do ?” said Josephine, humbly. “I found out it was your turn, and so I stole out, and hid myself here, half an hour ago. They were all at tea. Miss Anthon sent me to my room this afternoon, she said she knew I was sick, for I haven’t had a decent recitation this week, my head has ached so ! I thought you would be sure to help me some way, when you knew how miserable I was.”

“You got yourself into the scrape, and you must get out of it, the best way you can,” said Tom, cheeringly. “I’ve got troubles enough of my own, yours don’t begin.”

“But, Tom, you don’t really owe so much, do you ? I thought you were only trying to frighten me.”

“Don’t I, though ! I wish I didn’t !” said Tom, with less bravado, and more settled gloom. It aggravated him to know that Josephine was in trouble too, and he could not help speaking crossly to her. He was full of all bitter and impatient thoughts, as he left her, and went on his way, angry at Charlie and Frank, for getting him “into such a scrape,” as he called it, at his father and mother, for making him “such a mean allowance,” and most of all, angry at himself, at having been so rough towards his poor little sister.

For her, the last avenue of hope was shut, as she walked slowly back to the house, her head bent down, and the hot tears falling so thick and fast. Marianne must know it now, that she had taken the ring and lost it, and worse still, could not replace it. How much Marianne would have to forgive her, if she forgave her at all ! And what should she say to Miss Anthon, who had charged her to have a pair of overshoes before another day, and had scolded her severely, because she had neglected to get them, and so exposed herself to sickness. She longed to throw herself in her mother’s arms, and tell her all ; but her mother was far away, ignorant of all her unhappiness.

She stopped on the landing opposite Marianne's room, to get breath ; the pain in her side was so very bad, going up stairs. Lately she had darted by it for fear of encountering her friend, and now, as she stood there in the black shadow of the unlighted hall, Miss Baily came out, and went down, leaving the door open behind her. Marianne was sitting by the study table, all alone, looking so good and calm, as the light from the shaded lamp fell on her face, and the smoothly banded hair.

Shrinking and cowering for a moment, Josephine sprang forward the next, urged by some irresistible influence, and sitting down on the floor at her friend's feet, laid her head in her lap, and sobbed, and sobbed, as if her heart would break.

Marianne, startled as she was, asked no questions. She only looked down pityingly on the weak child, and smoothed her hair, as her mother would have done, with those soft hands. Gradually a sense of comfort came with this gentle caress, she ceased to sob so violently, and at last looked up into those loving eyes, with "Please don't hate me, Marianne ;—please don't."

"Why should I hate my poor sick little



A True Friend.—p. 156.

friend ? ” said Miss Fanshaw, soothingly. “ I’m afraid you are nervous, dear, and you have been out too, with only this cape and hood ; you ought not to do so, no wonder you get sick.”

“ It’s not that !—don’t you truly know ? Don’t scold me till I get through—you can’t tell how ill it has made me. Oh, your beautiful ring, Marianne ! and I can’t buy you another ; not now, I mean, and you must not ask me why ! ”

“ Is that all ? ” asked Miss Fanshaw, pleasantly, when the broken tale was at length concluded. “ The ring was not of much value in itself.”

“ I know,” interrupted Josephine, “ but I heard you tell Helen how much you thought of it, from some other reason ; that was what made me feel the worst all the while, though you are very, very good, and I know pearls must cost a great deal ! ”

“ It was the seal ring, fortunately,—the pearl ring was given to me by an aunt I never saw but twice. The seal ring was my mother’s.”

“ Oh, I am so thankful ! ” said Josephine, brightening up with sudden energy. “ So very, very thankful. Will you tell Miss Anthon it was me, and not thieves ? I was so dreadfully

frightened that night ! And please tell her not to ask me about overshoes again. I can't get any, and I can't tell."

"It may be found yet," said Miss Fanshaw, encouragingly, "and then you would not have to replace it, if I was ever so exacting ; though, Josephine," and here she stopped a minute, hesitatingly, "I do not think you have done exactly right."

"I *know* I haven't."—There was so much humility and submission in the tone, that it was hard for Marianne to go on reprovingly.

"I don't think you will mistake me, Joe ; truly, I do not care very much for the ring, I have so many, and I never wear them, as you know. But, dear child, all the troubles in our lives come from little beginnings,—I have found that out already ; troubles that we make for ourselves, I mean ; those God *permits*, but does not send directly, so to speak—such as come through our 'secret faults,' our besetting sins. You will not think me unkind, will you, Joe ?"

"Oh, no ! dear Marianne ; no, indeed ! Please go on."

"These are pretty little hands," continued Miss Fanshaw, taking one of Josephine's softly between her own, "and this is smooth, bright

hair ; but Josephine Bleeker thinks too much of them, and admires them a great deal more than any one else does."

A mortified, almost angry feeling, made the little girl feel like snatching the hand away ; she wanted to be comforted after all, and not reproved.

"My dear child," said Marianne, still more seriously, "the deepest mortifications, and sorrows and errors in a woman's life, spring from unchecked vanity. I know the mortifications in my own case, and I have *seen* the sorrow."

"You ! you *never* were vain !"

"Vainer than vanity itself,—I am now, in the very bottom of my heart ; you don't know how many ways there are for it to struggle out, or to hide itself. But never mind now, Josephine, parading faults, we think we have conquered, is one of these ways. You know you are a pretty little thing—Clementina admires you, and tells you of it continually ; the girls praise your compositions, and look up to you, there in your class ; Miss Anthon has too much to see to, to have time for studying character closely. You have a great many temptations now, Joe,—and if you don't begin in earnest, you will have more

falls, and harsher judgments than mine. You can trust my love."

It was very unpalatable truth, for all that, and Josephine did not look up, or speak; the consciousness that Marianne was right made the wound sorer.

"Now, I am going to see you safely in bed," said Miss Fanshaw, seeing that Josephine's cold was worse than even she herself had realized, in the strength that anxiety had given her, and playfully raising the reluctant head. "No more midnight, or twilight rambles, if you please, Miss Bleeker, or I shall feel in duty bound to report you."

But Josephine, making a great effort to overcome the unjust and unkind feelings that were springing up, kissed her true friend with real warmth, and went to her room alone. She knew that Clementina had permission to study in one of the other rooms, lest the glare of the lamp should trouble her, as it often did when she had those bad headaches,—and she wanted to be all alone, to think.

It was a very rambling and interrupted self-examination, but it was the beginning of the hardest of all studies, "self-knowledge." She traced back her troubles to the very commence-

ment, on that pleasant Saturday, when she had written the wonderful poem, and found it was the boyish flattery of her brother's friend, which had decided her to lend money that she actually needed ; she had not even the satisfaction of feeling that it was purely to oblige Tom. Then she wondered that she had not thought, at the time, she was helping Tom in what seemed to be *his* besetting sin.

Marianne was certainly right about vanity being at the bottom of the borrowed ring. Then came a glimmering of her mother's rule about that, and many other things she had thought hard and over strict. A sense of shame and remorse for unjust thoughts towards this kind, loving mother, brought a feeling nearer to humility than Josephine had ever known before, and as she rose from asking forgiveness of her Father in Heaven, she thought nothing could ever tempt her to err again ; she was sure she could not, having suffered so much. There was one thing, only, forgotten in Josephine's prayer, and penitence, the most important of all ; but she did not know yet, that "of herself she could do nothing."

CHAPTER XII.

FAMILY DISCUSSIONS.

"Debt, like the moth, makes valueless furs and velvets."

DOUGLAS JERROLD.

IF Josephine could have seen "what they were all doing at home" that night, as she wished, in falling asleep,—she would have found the table still standing, waiting for her father to come in to tea, and Olly at one of the front windows watching for him by the glare of the street lamps, upon the slippery pavement.

Mrs. Bleeker, sewing by her little work-table, —her hands were never idle now, not even to take up the new books and magazines she so much loved to read,—glanced up at the clock occasionally, as her needle flew in and out the little apron she was making almost mechanically. It was well the work was plain, for she sighed now and then, quite as unconsciously as she threaded

her needle, like one who checks herself in a train of dreary thoughts and speculations, only to take it up, and go on again, more wearily than before.

"Here comes a carriage," said Olive, putting her little round head out from her tent-like hiding-place. "It's going to stop here—yes, somebody's getting out."

"Perhaps some friend has brought papa home," said Mrs. Bleeker, a little uneasily. It was so very late, but then it often was now; Olly's watch was almost nightly, and Mrs. Bleeker accomplished a great deal more sewing before tea, than she did afterwards.

"No, it's a lady—in a cloak and hood," said Olly, turning back to the window. "Why, if it isn't aunt Lucy!" and she ran into the hall, to open the door herself for this favorite and fascinating aunt, her mother's only sister.

Aunt Lucy kissed Olive for her attentions, and throwing off her satin lined hood, went into the back parlor. It was only an opera cloak that she wore, after all, of white cashmere, trimmed with swan's down, and very becoming to her fair round arms and throat. Her hair was elegantly dressed, with a garland of moss roses, so like nature, that the inexperienced Olive was

completely deceived, and wondered where they could have grown at this season of the year. Broad hoops of gold clasped her snow-white gloves at the wrist, and a faint breath of perfume, so faint as to be enjoyed with scarcely noticing it, was wafted from the tiny embroidered handkerchief she held so daintily. Olive walked around her ample flounces admiringly, and thought that aunt Lucy was a great deal prettier than a picture, as she wondered that her mother never went to the Opera, or wore evening dresses now. The very thing that "Aunt Lucy," Mrs. Hamilton, was saying.

"And where *do* you keep yourself, Kate? I don't know how many people have asked me if you have entirely given up society."

"I should scarcely think they would ask, when they know what a nursery full I have," said Mrs. Bleeker, warding off the direct attack upon her conduct and intentions.

"Well, come this once—I know you are asked," urged Mrs. Hamilton; "it's not too late to dress, now; I came around early on purpose. Come, now!"

Olive looked up from an inspection of the carving on her aunt's inlaid fan, and wondered

what she called late. Their clock said, quarter of nine, and nine was her very latest bed-time.

"I have nothing to wear, to begin with," said her mother.

"Oh yes, you have," interrupted Mrs. Hamilton, "that silk you wore on New-Year's. Henry said it was very becoming, and your Honiton cape, then your India scarf around your shoulders, and there you are."

"No, *here* I am, and here I intend to stay, Lucy." There was playfulness and firmness both in Mrs. Bleeker's tone. "Besides, I have never worn the scarf,—I do not consider that it is mine!"

"Not yours! why, who in the world *does* it belong to?"

"I think it's about bed-time, Olly," said Mrs. Bleeker, instead of answering her; and Olive, who had taken supper with the children at dark, laid down the fan, very unwillingly, it must be owned, and looked her last on aunt Lucy, and her fascinating toilette.

"Who *does* it belong to?" resumed Mrs. Hamilton, when the door had closed upon the reluctant Olive.

"To Mr. Bleeker's creditors," said her sister, quietly taking up her sewing.

“What in the world are you thinking of, Kate?” said Mrs. Hamilton, with a look of alarm,—“Richard hasn’t failed.”

“No. I only wish he had.”

“Wish he had! why, you are crazy! you don’t know what you are talking about!”

“Yes, I do, perfectly well. Nothing would be expected of us then, and there would be the end of this perpetual worry.”

“Oh,” said Mrs. Hamilton, much relieved, “haven’t you got used to it yet? I never mind Henry more than the wind, when he says he can’t afford things. I only say I *must* have it, and there’s the end of it. He frets and fusses, but la, child, all men do,—he gets over it.”

“Mr. Bleeker ‘fusses’ the other way, because I won’t go out, and won’t get things; but how can I, when I don’t know they will ever be paid for. No, I cannot do it, Lucy, any more than I could steal.”

“Every body else does,” said Mrs. Hamilton, disliking the implied rebuke to her opinions. “We are no worse than our neighbors. It’s all grandmother, and uncle Peter.”

“I wish I was back there now,—children and all,—indeed, I do, Lucy; you need not look so incredulous.”

"Every one to their liking," and Mrs. Hamilton shrugged her white shoulders, from which the light cloak had fallen. "I would not go back for all New York, nothing could tempt me! The very thought of such a humdrum, old-fashioned, countrified, hard-working existence, makes me sick! Uncle Peter, too."

"We owe every thing to him," said Mrs. Bleeker warmly, "and Lucy, I *do wish* you would write once in a while. I had a letter this morning, and I know he feels hurt."

"Oh, I never have a minute; and besides, I don't like to be reminded of the time I could 'eat without silver forks,' as Cornelia Holbrooke says."

"I'd rather eat with steel ones and know they belonged to me! I'm sick—I'm worn out with this bondage of keeping up appearances."

"Half New York are keeping you company," said Mrs. Hamilton provokingly, "and half the world besides. Don't worry about your husband's business affairs, for mercy sake, Kate! I don't; I should have a nice time of it if I did!"

"Here he comes now!"

Mr. Bleeker had let himself in with a dead latch key, and came in with a compliment to

Mrs. Hamilton, whom he admired greatly ; but for all the smile and bantering, there was a worn, harassed look in every line of his face, and a cloud settled down over it as he returned to the parlor, after seeing her into the carriage. It was not moroseness, or fretfulness, only gloom, and despondency, harder still for his wife to see.

“What was Lucy rattling on about, when I came in ?” he said presently, trying to shake off this mood. “No, never mind pouring me any tea ; I don’t want any thing ; I could not eat any thing to-night.”

“*Dear* Richard, how is all this to end ?” Mrs. Bleeker said, suddenly rising and coming to his side.

“I wish I knew,” he answered with a groan. “My hands are tied whichever way I turn. I wish you’d go out more, Kate. Why not have gone with Lucy to-night ? people begin to think strange of it, she says.”

“I don’t care, we can’t go without incurring obligations we cannot afford to return ; that’s one thing—then I do not feel easy about the children. I believe honestly I have lost all taste for what we call society. But Richard, why do you live so—why not settle up at once,

and pay off what you can, and begin again ?—other people do ! ”

“ You don’t know what you are talking about,” said Mr. Bleeker, hastily. “ I can keep along, somehow, but I could not begin to pay off every thing.”

“ Well, why not divide what you have, and pay the rest when you can ; surely that would be better than this wearing, harassed life. Brooks has sent in his bill again to-day, and St. Legers’ came last week, though I could not bear to tell you of it, and ”—

“ Yes, I knew, and forty more. All very well, Kate, but you and the children must live ; and if I give up all, what am I to do ? ”

“ I *wish* you had been brought up in the country ! ”

“ What has that got to do with it ? Yes, so do I ; I should not have had such expensive habits. I did want to go on a farm, when I was a boy, I always thought I should like it, but father would not listen to it.”

“ Why not try it yet ? ” said his wife, with a sudden light coming into her eyes.

“ I’m too old to begin experimenting—and new land takes capital. I’ve thought it all over,” and Mr. Bleeker shook his head. “ I

couldn't bear coming down in the world, *you* could not, all our friends would be mortified. It sounds very well in story books, I know. People move out West, and make their fortunes in four years, and come back to astonish everybody ! But it is not so in real life. A failure is disgraceful, the best way you can fix it."

"Surely, nothing can be more disgraceful than debt !" interrupted Mrs. Bleeker.

"Owning up to debt ! that's it—it's the poverty, and not the dishonesty that people cry out about, and cut you for ! I know all about these fine Western stories. I've seen log houses, and eaten corn bread, and fried pork ; you could not live on it—and I don't want you and the children down with fever and ague."

"Have you the least idea how you stand ?"

"Not the slightest ! I have not gone over things thoroughly for three years. I have not dared to !"

"Oh, if you only could pay off all !" said Mrs. Bleeker, energetically.

"I should have to sacrifice every thing, and perhaps not do it then. What would I have to start on ?—farming takes capital, as well as any thing else ! No, no, if I can't swim, I must float."

“*Dear Richard,*” said Mrs. Bleeker again, “I know it’s hard ; but you need not experiment or take new land. There’s the old farm ; uncle Peter would be *thankful* to have us come, he says so—he’s getting old, but there would be his experience. He says in his very last letter, that he wishes I was a man, and he could feel the old place would be left in my hands. Read it”—and she drew the letter from her work table, and sat watching his face eagerly as he studied over the stiff, cramped hand, conveying so much love and kindness to his adopted child.

But for all, Mr. Bleeker acknowledged that it was very kind, and to be sure she deserved the farm twice as much as Lucy ; the thing was perfectly impossible in his opinion.

Mrs. Bleeker did not despair. It was the first clue that she had found conducting from this labyrinth of difficulties, and she would not easily let it go. When she went up to bid her little ones a final good night, and see that the baby was covered, she sat down on the foot of Peter’s bed, with a little shoe that she had stumbled over in her hand, and thought it all over again. But the picture was almost too bright for one who had lived in the shade so long ; these little sleepers rolling about in the soft

velvety grass of the lawn, before the farm-house ; growing strong and vigorous in the freedom, and fresh air ; her husband with this weary weight lifted from his spirits, frolicking with the baby, as he had not done since Josephine occupied the well-worn cradle ; her own mind calm, serene, and tranquil, in the round of daily duties and simple pleasures.

“ Oh, if he could only understand how willingly I would go,” she said to herself, stooping down to kiss the flushed face of the little sleeper ; and then seized by a sudden impulse, she knelt down to pray, while her hands were knit together in an intense, and it seemed almost hopeless longing.

But for a time there was only a confused rebellious struggling against her present trials, and a miserable retrospect of the past. “ If it was God’s will—if I could but feel it was God’s will ! I would try to be patient, try to bear it ! All these weary years—all this dreary future ! and my children to grow up with the same fault, to suffer the same punishment. Oh, I cannot—I cannot bear it ! ”

Then came a remembrance of the blessings mingled in this bitter cup,—her faith in her husband’s love, and real tenderness for her ; the

very wish to indulge and please her, leading him on in his careless expenditure,—her children all remaining, the little band unbroken, when so many a mother grieved over an empty cradle, or a new-made grave,—this, then, was *her cross*, this continual annoyance and petty mortification, this thwarting of her wishes, this breaking in on habits of order, and regularity, and honesty, that had become a second nature, in the strict training of her children,—what was it, but that daily denial of wishes and of *will*, without which, self is never conquered.

And when the prayer was uttered at last, it was for submission, and strength, and patience to bear the cross, *not to have it removed*.



CHAPTER XIII.

N E W S F R O M H O M E .

“Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”

THE first soft, languid days of early spring began to brighten up the sombre pine woods at Rockville, where the school-girls sought for the earliest flowers, and brushed the fallen leaves away for the glossy wintergreen, and its scarlet berries.

Their walks were far more invigorating than the dull round of fifteen blocks, which the boarders at a fashionable city school accomplished, as they do their lessons, because it is one of the rules, and with a very faint idea that exercise is intended to stimulate the languid pulse, and brighten the brain, over-wearied by problems and propositions, and unending verbs.

Here, in the seclusion of village life, a walk was a very different matter. It was not considered necessary for the older girls to be accompanied by a teacher, and instead of the procession, "tall at the top," and shortened, as the ages of the demure couples lessen, they went out by twos and threes, choosing their companions, and their route. Josephine's class had been allowed this liberty of late, and "a walk," with them, was an affair of moment,—arranged two or three days beforehand,—the projectors settling who should go, and who "would be in the way." To be sure, heartburnings and jealousies would grow out of it, and some declared, "they wouldn't go if they *had* been asked,"—who did not mean what they said—while others tossed their heads, and "thanked fortune they were as good as any body, if some people did not think so."

A little knot of the unasked had gathered themselves together, and were walking up and down the playground, with their arms around each other, on this particular afternoon. There was the youngest, Miss Dana, though the oldest girl in her class, very dull and behindhand with her lessons, she was a sparkling, bright-eyed girl; Angélique Tona, a Cuban by birth, though she

had not seen Havana the last five years,—who made more mischief with her busy tongue, than any other two girls in school put together ; Ada Thomas, a cross, sullen, sickly child, a Southerner, who had never “ put on her own stockings, or hemmed a handkerchief,” as she often complained to the others, before she came North,—where she had to do *every* thing for herself, and well it was for her that she was obliged to ; Eliza and Rowana Gourlay, two of the party, came from a neighboring town, and were remarkable for nothing in particular, but being careless, and negligent, and curious,—the fault of early training from children,—but they were not the less disagreeable for that.

Angelique was not remarkable for her constancy to either party. Now she was Agnes Hadly’s devoted confidant, and then she would go over to the enemy for the sake of being made much of, and extracting sufficient material to carry the war into Josephine’s set again.

She usually sided with the person she was talking to, but quarrelled on the slightest pretext, and often without any pretext at all. Just now she was “ out ” with Clementina and Josephine, consequently she was warmly welcomed by the others. If Clementina had been

as clever as Josephine, in addition to her handsome wardrobe, and pretty face, she would have been the oracle of her party ; but her roommate, with just as much beauty, more style, and twice the intelligence, generally had an uncontested leadership ; consequently, the ungraciousness of their opponents was especially directed towards her.

“ What the fourth-year girls see in that stuck-up Josephine Bleeker, I can’t tell, for my part,” said the awkward Harriet Dana. “ Why, I’m a head taller, and they never ask *me* into their rooms.”

“ But then there’s so little in your head, when you get to it,” Angelique wished very much to say,—but it would not have been polite, just then, so she contented herself with adding, “ I don’t see ! ”

“ *My* father is twice as rich as hers, any day,” said Ada Thomas, fretfully. “ He could buy half Georgia, if he liked. I don’t believe they even keep a carriage, and we have a coachman and three waiter-boys,—Ma has seventeen servants on the lot ! ” and “ Ma’s ” daughter looked as if that fact alone should entitle her to the highest consideration.

“ I guess they’re poor and proud, for my

part," said one of the Gourlays. "She's the vainest girl *I* ever saw. Her compositions aint so wonderful, after all,"—just then the pedestrians came in sight, at some distance, it is true, on the top of "Sugar Camp," a neighboring hill.

Josephine, in their midst, was talking rapidly and loud ; she was in the highest spirits, and on the best of terms with herself. She sometimes wondered how she could have been so miserable such a little while ago, now that it was so happily over with. Miss Anthon had purchased the overshoes, and charged them in her school bill ; Marianne never mentioned the ring, and seemed entirely to forget the occurrence ; and though Tom had not yet returned the loan, Josephine had made her pencils last wonderfully, and found it was possible to mend her gloves. She loved Tom dearly, with all their sparring when together, and felt so sorry that he was worried, that she gradually gave up all thoughts of the bracelet ; and as for replacing the ring, she had a hundred plans for getting the money, the latest of all was, sending two of her best "poems" to a magazine publisher, with undefined visions of possible sums that she was to receive in return. "It was almost time to hear from Philadelphia,"

she whispered to Clem, who was in the secret, as the stage with the great leathern mail bag under the driver's feet rolled by them ; and her color mounted higher, and her laugh grew louder at the thought.

If the worst came to the worst, she could take the five dollars for the next term, and buy another ring with that ; she had a feeling of mortification at not being able to replace it at once, more from wondering what Marianne thought of it, and whether she would think her father was too poor to give her the money ; and she had various other occasional annoyances at being penniless, that her brother's "generosity" had occasioned her. But in the main, she admired herself very much, and certainly did "take airs" enough to deserve some of the severe remarks that were just then being made about her.

"Are you coming back next term ?" asked Agnes Hadly, who hated school, and was very much in hopes that she should not.

"Oh, of course !" answered Josephine, with one of those very airs, "I am to go through regularly, and then have a year's finishing lessons."

"I mean to tease Ma into letting me have

Belletti," said Clementina. "He's so fashionable,—all the girls in Brooklyn have him, he comes over twice a week."

"My!" said Agnes Hadly, "he asks forty dollars a quarter."

"I don't care if he asks sixty," said Miss Jones, with a toss.

"No, nor I?" said Josephine, "I mean to have him, too."

"I wish *my* father was rich," sighed Agnes, who was a great deal too honest and out-spoken to please her sister. Ellen was continually checking some of her revelations.

"Shouldn't you hate to have to sweep and dust and make your own bed, always, as we have to at school?" said Clem, falling behind a little, and adding in a lower voice, "It must be horrid to be poor!"

"Oh, that's nothing to dragging about with the children," said Agnes, not at all offended. "Only I'd rather do that even than to have to study, they're so cross and heavy, and you never have a minute to yourself. As soon as one hushes, another begins. Ellen never would touch the children. She had to sew, though."

"I wouldn't sew for any body," said Clem,

who hated to touch her needle, except for fancy work.

“Nor I,” said Josephine. “You don’t say you make your own underclothes !”

“Mother says,” and Agnes did bridle up a little—“mother says *every* woman ought to know how to sew, no matter how rich she is ! and there are a great many worse things than being poor.”

Josephine had heard her own mother say the same many a time ; and Olive, who had been more with her mother, was already an accomplished little seamstress.

“Miss Fanshaw makes her own clothes, all but her dresses,” suggested some one.

“I don’t believe *they’re* so very wealthy,” said Clem, “after all. She dresses as common as possible.”

“She does not have to, though,” broke in Josephine, eager to uphold her friend, “to my certain knowledge. Marianne says, she doesn’t think it is right to spend so much in clothes.”

“I’d rather be poor than mean,” Agnes said, a little spitefully, for she was jealous of Josephine’s intimacy with one of the fourth-year girls.

“She’s not in the least mean, Agnes Hadly!”

“Oh, well!” said Agnes, “don’t take my head off; you’re spilling all your moss and berries, swinging your basket so hard. There comes Ellen from the post-office, I wonder if there’s any thing for me.”

Ellen kept them at arm’s length, until they reached the Seminary, when Angelique and her malcontents closed around her too. Letters from home were common cause, and all petty quarrels were for the time overlooked.

“Who bids?” said Ellen, holding the large packet of letters and newspapers high above her head. Was there ever any thing more tantalizing than to see those white and yellow envelopes, those nicely wrapped newspapers, and not to know who they belonged to!

“There *must* be one for me,” fretted Ada Thomas. “I wish you wouldn’t be *hateful*, Miss Hadly.”

“That’s a good way to be helped first, but you may make yourself easy, there isn’t any. Here, Angelique, here’s a paper for you, that’s all. Dana, there’s three Danas,” said Ellen, shuffling the letters at last, like an accomplished post-office clerk. “Pocket money, Clem?”

and a suspiciously thick envelope fell to Miss Jones. "Fanshaw, Anthon, Anthon, Fanshaw again, Clark, Brown, Adams; why, Joe, I thought I had something for you. Yes, here it is, the very last one."

"Oh," said Josephine, eagerly, thinking for a moment the looked-for decision had arrived. "Where's it from? who is yours from, Clem?"

Clementina, absorbed in her own epistle, did not answer or even look up again until she saw Josephine start up from the piazza stairs, where several of them sat down, too impatient for the news to go any further, and rush away to their room.

"What's the matter?—where's Joe gone?" she asked Agnes.

"Why, it was so funny—did you see her, Ada? well, she read about three lines, and then looked down to the bottom of the page, and then she just *started* up. My! such a face! as if she had as much as she could do to keep from crying, and ran off as hard as she could."

"Dear me; I hope nobody's sick—Olive, or any of them," said Clem, familiar with the household names.

"Or dead," suggested Agnes, consolingly.

"I must go right away and see;" so leav-

ing a murmur, of wondering and guessing all sorts of probable calamities behind, Clementina followed her friend.

The door was bolted on the inside.

“ Joe—let me in ; it’s only me,” shouted Clementina, through the key-hole.

“ Oh, oh, oh dear, what shall I do ! ” sobbed Josephine’s voice, instead of a reply.

“ What *is* the matter ? *do* open the door, dear, dear Joe—it’s Clementina ; for pity’s sake, what’s the matter ? ”

Thus adjured, Josephine unfastened the bolt, revealing her tear-swollen face, and disordered hair, for a moment, before she threw herself headlong on the floor again, as she was very apt to do, when any thing worried her, and cried afresh.

“ What *is* it ? ” besought Clementina, deciding rapidly that not only Olive, but Peter and Kate must be dead, probably of scarlet fever. “ Or is it the poem ? I wouldn’t care—I’m sure I wouldn’t care for that, dear ; we all know how sweetly you *do* write, if all the ugly old editors in the world—”

“ Oh ! it isn’t that. Oh, Clementina—*father has failed !* ”

Clementina was silenced by this unexpected

blow. With Josephine, she regarded such a calamity beyond all consolation, so she sat down and cried too ; while Angelique, who had followed up-stairs, and stood by the window, flew away to spread the disagreeable intelligence.

“ What *will* you do ? ” sobbed Miss Jones.

“ Oh, I *don't* know ! ” sobbed Miss Bleeker, back again. “ I never can hold my head up ; don't cry, Clementina.”

“ I can't help it ; oh, Joe ! ” and she squeezed Josephine's hand in real true-hearted sympathy.

“ Every thing is going to be sold off—the piano and all—and father's going—going—going off to live with Uncle Peter, way out of the world ! ”

“ You, poor child, you—dear, dear, dear ! ” cried Clementina, rocking herself backwards and forwards. “ *You* shan't go, not one step—you shall live with us always ! ”

Rather a rash promise for a girl of twelve to make, but Clementina was very sincere in her offer, and it comforted Josephine for a time. “ Only think,” said she, sitting up and drying her eyes, “ way off in the woods, dear knows where. On a farm ! ”

“ Horrors ! ” returned Clem. “ Are they going right away ? ”

“ They’ve *gone*, actually gone ! by this time ; and Tom and I are to finish our term, and not come back again. Poor Tom ! he hates the country just as I do. I think father and mother must be crazy, don’t you ? ”

“ I wouldn’t mind it a bit, if I was you ; ” and then, by way of setting a brave example, Clementina burst into tears again herself. “ I will write to ma, there, to-night, to ask you to spend the summer, at the very least. Of course they’ll come to the city every winter.”

“ I don’t know,” said Josephine, doubtfully. “ It’s a dreadful place, Clementina ; I was there once, a great many years ago, when I was a little girl. And Uncle Peter’s such a horrid old man, and smokes a pipe, and uses a red silk handkerchief ! ” At which climax the fortitude of the moment gave way again, and not even Clementina’s bravest arguments could check the tide, until Josephine had cried herself into a sick headache. Every time the bell rang, she was sure Tom had come to talk over the dreadful disgrace with her ; but, as usual, when he was expected, no Tom came. Josephine had a very indistinct idea of what a

failure was. She knew that it was considered a great mortification, and that people would call her father "poor Bleeker," and shake their heads, as she had seen him do over others. She pictured to herself the auction, and her mother and the children crying, and her father in one of those terribly cross moods, which they all dreaded so. And she would have to sew, and help Olly take care of the children—for Mrs. Bleeker said that only Susan, the cook, was going with them into the country. There was no comfort whichever way she turned, but in Clementina's proposal that she should go home with her, and she did not believe her mother would consent to that.

Great was the commotion all over the school, and some pitied Josephine, while others said it "served her right," and were curious to see how she would conduct herself under her altered fortunes. Miss Fanshaw sat with her all the next morning, and bathed her head, and talked with her, as Miss Fanshaw always talked, kindly and sensibly. She had heard of Mr. Bleeker's failure through Miss Anthon, to whom he had written about Josephine some days before, and from her own father, who said it was a very honorable thing, and every one was paid almost

in full ; that Mr. Bleeker had given up every thing, and behaved so well, that his creditors wished to make some arrangement for him to go on again, but he had made up his mind not to do so !

Josephine, who had listened eagerly thus far, turned away her head, and said, crossly, “that she wished he *had* gone on, and she hated the country, and meant to stay with Clementina as long as she could.”

“Not if your mother *needs* you,” said Marianne ; but Josephine did not wish to discuss the matter.

Clementina certainly behaved very well, considering how much she thought of wealth and fashion ; and in due course of time, the promised invitation was received from Mrs. Jones, who said that she had written to Mrs. Bleeker about it ; but before then, a fresh trouble awaited Josephine, if possible, more unlooked for, and harder to bear.

We might as well acknowledge, first as last, that from the Philadelphia publisher, no answer ever came ; he having too much to attend to, to be able to make each “rejected address” the subject of a separate letter.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CRISIS.

"A wise son maketh a glad father, but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother."

PROVERBS.

TOM was gone. He had found himself so involved in debt and disgrace, that he had taken the coward's way out of difficulties and fled from them.

Yet, so strangely blind was he, to the real truth of the case, that he imagined he was doing a very daring and clever thing, when he made up a bundle of things he considered necessary, and leaving a letter in a conspicuous place on the mantle in his room, he had let himself out of the Brick an hour before daylight, with his bundle hung on the end of a cane he had once gloried in possessing, and trudged off on foot like a runaway apprentice.

"The world was all before him, where to choose," and tossing up a penny to decide which

road to take, he stepped along rather fast, until he considered himself safe from the ignominy of being discovered and brought back again to a public reprimand. That would be a very dull termination to the adventure, though he might well be thankful if nothing worse befell him.

“I wonder what father will think *now!*” he said to himself, after the first excitement of the escape was over, and he slackened his pace a little.

The immediate cause of his departure was the receipt of a letter from his father, to whom he had at last written for a remittance, goaded on by Charlie Spear’s repeated dunning, and a threat from Kelly that their bill should be sent to head-quarters if they did not settle up. The upholsterer’s account for carpet and curtains had also come in, and was of course twice as much as they expected it to be, while several who had subscribed at first to refurnishing—to use Frank Flander’s inelegant but forcible expression—had “backed out.” The boys slighted him, now that he no longer had ready money, and Charlie Spear, suspecting something of the truth in the matter of the allowance, was particularly insulting. Even Joe Ferris, whom he had obliged again and again, gave many a sly thrust and

taunt on the play ground, or recitation room, where he put on twice as much braggadocia as ever, in a flimsy attempt to cover his secret disquiet.

As for the real object of his being at Rockville, he had gone backwards, rather than advanced, in his studies and general deportment the present term. An uneasy conscience, a restless mind full of useless expedients, and irritable suspicions, were bad assistants for the fulfilment of duties, for this life, or the higher obligation of preparation for another. Tom tried to leave the last out of his meditations altogether, and succeeded almost entirely ; he could not have dwelt upon it seriously, and persisted in such a course.

He found himself stooping to petty meanness and deception he would once have despised, such as his conduct to Josephine, which even her generous forbearance did not make him forget. She welcomed him, with the same fondness and pride, as soon as her own troubles were cleared up, and laughed as heartily at his jokes, and nonsense, or bore his boyish fault-finding with wonderful patience and humility.

“ Poor Joe, when I come back a rich man, I’ll bring her the most elegant bracelet that ever

was seen,—see if I don't," said our young traveler, as he caught the last glimpse of the Seminary buildings, and never thinking of the anxiety and mortification the discovery of his flight would be to her. As for his father's failure, he knew nothing about it; that same day's mail would bring the letter explaining the harshness and bitterness, as he called it, the answer his application for money had contained. It arrived just in the midst of Mr. Bleeker's perplexities, when he was making up his mind to follow his wife's advice, and give up all to his creditors. He could trace in Tom's half confession an indulgence of the same fault that had commenced with himself quite as early, and had brought him to this pass—reckless generosity, careless self-indulgence, openness to flattery, and a dread of ridicule.

So forgetting what his own example and influence had been, "that the sins of the fathers were visited upon the children," he wrote an angry rebuke and denial on the impulse of the moment.

It had the effect that such ill-judged corrections usually have. Tom might have been softened by a cooler and more dignified sentence, or if the letter had expressed any desire to receive

the confidence he was longing to give to some one, and surely a father is the friend one would naturally seek at such a time. If he wrote to his mother, it would be all the same he thought. "No ! he would not stoop to sue for help and pardon again ! He would look out for himself ; he could show them that there was more in him than they thought there was ! They would be glad enough to see him when he came back again, rolling in wealth, to pay off every thing !"

For Tom, who had never even earned his pocket money as many boys do, had very grand but indistinct ideas of "the battle of life," and so he started in it literally a foot soldier.

"A slice of bread and cheese wouldn't be hard to take !" he was obliged to confess to himself, when he had walked about three miles, and imagined it was ten at least ; "or a cup of old Mother Allen's coffee ! Isn't there a precious row about this time. Old Peter carrying my note to the desk, and the Professor forwarding it to the Governor, and he post-hasting it to Rockville. I guess he'll wish he had ponied up handsomely. I hope mother won't take it hard ; mother's right up and down, but she never flies out at a fellow, and calls him names,"—there was a little faltering in the cheery whistle that

Master Tom tried to keep up, trudging independently along, as he thought of his mother's anxiety, and the true, unwavering love and kindness he had always received from her. He resolved to let her hear from him, the first one, at any rate.

The spirit of adventure sustained him tolerably well, all through that day. He passed through Franklin before nightfall, so that he knew he was fourteen miles away. He had fared sumptuously on crackers and a red herring, bought with one of the very few pieces of silver remaining to him ; and concluded to take up his quarters at a dilapidated roadside tavern, for which he paid away another. Tom, was naturally extremely fastidious,—the sheets were not remarkably clean, or wide, the patchwork quilt and musty feather bed, suggested his own room at home, with its neat furniture and white counterpane, rather more forcibly than was agreeable, considering he had turned his back upon it for ever. He could not get the window up to air the room for a long time, and when once up, it obstinately refused to come down again ; and he felt chilled, and stiff with his journey, when he rose the next morning. But what are hardships, when one has

set out to seek one's fortune ! Tom made his toilette in a tin wash-basin, with brown soap, and a great deal of becoming fortitude,—but he did think the fried salt pork would have tasted better if he had not seen it cooked by such a slatternly-looking woman, who, he was sure, had not combed her hair that morning, or made any ablutions at all !

Josephine, made sick at heart by this new calamity, for she had been obliged to undergo the mortification of a close examination from Professor Phelps, before Miss Anthon, was almost frantic with anxiety to know what had befallen her favorite brother. She pictured him to herself, in the very extreme of want and starvation, wandering alone over a dreary road, in the dread darkness of the night, torturing himself with remorseful fancies, and tempted to some terrible rashness, beyond even her imagination.

He had not gone home, that his note distinctly stated ; adding, in the language common to juvenile defaulters, that “pursuit would be of no avail.” He might have made himself easy on that score. Professor Phelps had no idea of sending after him. Tom had been in disgrace too often, to make this last step very

astonishing in the Principal's eyes, and would have been very much disappointed if he had been there to have witnessed the effect of his high-flown communication.

Professor Phelps did what he considered his duty ; made a rigorous examination of Tom's chief comrades, of his sister, and his affairs,—and forwarded the result to Mr. Bleeker, enclosing all bills and obligations, and declining to receive his son again, when he *was* found.

In other words, *Tom was expelled*,—disgracefully and unconditionally ; and, as is usual, the innocent, and not the guilty, bore the shame and odium of his conduct. Josephine, like her mother, keenly sensitive to honor and honesty, felt that it would be impossible ever to see any one again, and was sure that no one at the Academy, in the Seminary, or even in New York, thought of any thing, or talked of any thing else. She had not been out of her room since she returned to it from the parlor, after seeing Professor Phelps ; and neither Marianne's advice, or Clementina's persuasions, could induce her to leave her bed for more than a week.

A serious feverish attack was the natural result of all this worry and fretting, and it was pleasant to see how the real kindness of every

young girl's heart was called out, by the actual illness of one of their number. Angelique produced a box of Guava jelly, the very last remains of a consignment of sweetmeats from her aunt in Havana; Ada Thomas offered to lend her an elegantly bound copy of "Arabian Nights," and even to read it aloud to her, though every one knew how Ada hated trouble. The Gourlays stopped making spiteful remarks, and as for Agnes and Clementina, they could not have done too much for the invalid.

Miss Anthon, thinking it best to accept none of these kind offers, gave Josephine in charge to the two in whom she placed most confidence, Miss Fanshaw, and Miss Brown; the last to Josephine's great annoyance. "Ann Brown, of all people!" she said, fretfully, to Marianne. "She will be thinking herself as good as I am, now that papa has failed."

"She always has been," returned Marianne, determined not to indulge this ungracious humor, though Josephine was really suffering; but Josephine evaded the contact.

"Oh, my head—and my limbs ache so, and my feet are burning! please bathe my forehead, dear Marianne; was there ever any

one had so much trouble, or was miserable as I am !”

“There are people all around you, a great deal worse off,” said Miss Fanshaw, quietly, dipping a napkin in ice-water. “I know it is very, very hard, just now ; but you may be sure Tom is safe ; a boy of fourteen is quite old enough to take care of himself, and he will be glad enough to come back again some day, when he can appreciate home better.

“That’s the very worst part of it”—and the complaining tone showed that Josephine was determined to be miserable. “We haven’t any home to go to.”

“Oh yes, you have, dear, and a very pleasant one, I should judge from that letter I read for you yesterday. It must be looking beautifully now, with the grain springing up so thick and green in the fields, and the orchards in full bloom. I hope I shall see it for myself some day.”

“I did want a visit from you, very much,” said Josephine, drearily, “but now, such a horrid place, you haven’t the least idea, and every thing sold. But papa will be sure to get sick of it, that’s one comfort.”

“I hope not, I’m sure.”

“Why?” said the invalid, sharply. “I don’t think it’s very kind of you, when you *know* how I hate it.”

“Hush, Josephine,” said Marianne. “You will bring back the fever again; I do not know as I ought to let you talk at all; but I do not like to hear a little girl set up her own likes and dislikes against the judgments and the wishes of her father and mother. You do not think it shows a very obedient spirit, yourself, do you, now? If we all followed our own inclinations, and had and did exactly what we wanted, why, only think, what a nice time every one would have it! what a world of misrule it would be!”

“But mother said I might go to Clementine’s, if I wanted to,” said Josephine, thinking Marianne very prosy, and that she did not love her half as well as she used to.

“I wish you would let me see just what she says; have you any objections?” asked Marianne, after a little pause. Josephine had told her this before, and the consent did not seem like what she had always heard of Mrs. Bleeker. Miss Fanshaw did not think she was acting with her usual good judgment.

But Mrs. Bleeker, when seated at her desk,

to decline the polite invitation of Mrs. Jones, had altered her decision. She was grieved that Josephine could wish to be away from her when there was so much to be done, and when she might make herself so useful. She saw with a mother's keen insight, with a disposition that had been a life-long study, that Josephine shrank from their altered circumstances, from trouble, and work, and self-denial in any shape, and wished to put off the evil day as far as possible.

With such feelings, she could never be happy in their new home, and looking forward to the probable result, Mrs. Bleeker hazarded the trial. She did not visit Mrs. Jones ; she knew her to be wealthy and worldly, but there was nothing positively objectionable in the acquaintance. So she had written that Josephine must decide for herself, and at the same time, plainly told her that she could not expect a new spring outfit, situated as they were, or any allowance.

"In the country you could do with what you have," wrote Mrs. Bleeker. "Olly will be obliged to ; and wherever you are, you must do the same. Olly is a dear girl, and of the greatest assistance and comfort to me now. I should scarcely know what to do without her."

It was Josephine's true place, as the eldest daughter, that Olive had taken, and she could not help feeling it, when Marianne read this last paragraph aloud, with a peculiar emphasis, which showed she thought so too. But Josephine would not listen to the inner or the outward monitor. She would like well enough to be praised as her mother's comforter, but then, dragging with the children, and spoiling her small soft hands with housework ; no, no, she hated the country more than ever ; and Clementina was a dear sweet girl, and Mrs. Jones the most amiable of women to ask her ! She thought Marianne was very stiff and disagreeable lately, preaching " duty " and " the right " all the time, when she was sick, and in so much trouble ; and she did not know, after all, but she would rather have Ann sit there, who never pretended to lecture her, and minded her books, and her own affairs.

CHAPTER XV.

CASTLES IN THE AIR

“Turn again, Whittington! Lord Mayor of London!”

WHEN boys run away from home, in story books, they usually intend going to sea. For a wonder, this was not Tom's idea. He was something like Josephine in his dislike of hard work ; and besides, to go to sea he would have to get to New York in the first place, and so be likely to be discovered by his father, who was the last person he was anxious to encounter.

There was another important consideration. Tom wanted to be rich, as well as the master of his own actions, and boys who went to sea never came home rich. They returned very much grown, and browned, and brought quantities of parrots, and shells, and sandal-wood fans ; but he could not recollect that they had a great deal of ready money about them. “Cats” were no longer a good investment for the South Sea

Islands, as they were in Whittington's day, and he had lost the firm faith he once had in the pearl and diamond valleys of Sinbad.

He had nothing to do but make plans as he walked along. Meanwhile, it was very trying to one who was an Astor already in imagination, to have to eat bread without even a herring ; he was reduced to this extremity on the afternoon of the third day, and to sleep in a barn, as he should probably have to do, for the sum of his earthly possessions was exactly two cents, which jingled drearily in his pocket, as if they wanted company. It was a small basis for the magnificent fortune that still occupied his thoughts.

"I don't care !" said Tom, doggedly, "I won't go back, that's certain, and any clever fellow" ("like me," of course, he meant) "can make his own way, when he once gets started. Why, New-Year's day—didn't I go with father to that great, monstrous house in Lexington Avenue, with a marble pavement in the hall, and stained glass, and pictures and mirrors, no end to them ; and the lady, Mrs. Colton, with diamonds on, and the table all covered with silver,—and didn't father tell me, when we came out, that Mr. Colton had just two and threepence in

his pocket, when he came into New York a poor boy ! ”

But Tom, dwelling on results, forgot that Mr. Colton had been trained in the harsh school of poverty and toil, that he was willing to commence life in the humblest capacity, and sweep out the floors, and sleep under the counter of the warehouse he afterwards owned,—laying aside two cents out of every three he earned, and so building up his future on the firm foundation of industry, and economy, and self-denial.

“ Why, John Jacob Astor himself, was a poor boy, and so was Abbot Lawrence, and Daniel Webster,” and visions of political distinction now mingled with Tom’s more mercenary schemes. “ What would they say, if I should get to be a Member of Congress, and no thanks to any of them ! but then mother should know where I was, all the time, because she would worry, only I’d make her promise not to tell father. Then, when I was on my way to Washington, I’d stop and pay them a visit, and *forgive father !* ” (magnanimous Tom !) “ and give Joe and Peter every thing they want ! Yes, the West is the place for me ! Buffalo isn’t quite far enough, they might hear of me there ;

I'll go to Chicago; Mr. Lane, who dined with papa last vacation, had a great deal to say about it. I wonder if he wouldn't give a fellow a start, now! Of course, I would not let him know who I was, but he could see that I belonged to a good family, and ask no questions!"

But in the mean time, the possessor of all these brilliant air castles would have liked to know where he was going to sleep that night, and what he was going to have for his supper.

Out of his thousand and one vague plans, Tom had finally settled on Mr. Lane, the great Western land speculator, as his future patron,—and though he longed to begin the world at once, he must trust to the slow medium of a canal packet from Albany, in the first instance, working his passage at that!

"What am I going to do to-night, though, that's the first thing?" He was obliged to come down to the necessities of the moment, and to consider that he was on a road he knew nothing about,—already stiff and tired out with his unusually protracted walk, and the want of the nourishing food he had been accustomed to. He did not like the necessity of asking shelter for the night. He had had several adventures already, that were more romantic than agree-

able ; such as being warned off for a tramp and a straggler, where he had stopped to inquire the way ; or being advised to go to work, and “ not be idling round, a great lazy fellow like him,” when he had asked for a drink of buttermilk at a farm-house, where the woman was setting her churn and tin pans out in the sun. It was not heroic, strictly speaking, to run from a great brute of a house-dog, set fiercely upon him,—but he had done that,—and now, as he tried to persuade himself that there was no bed like a good bundle of fresh hay, he was obliged to confess that he was mortally afraid of rats, in the dark, and barns were generally full of them !

So far he had had fine weather, unusually warm for the season, and there was a real pleasure in watching the farmers at work in the fields, and the cattle browsing close to the fences, or on the sunny slopes of the hills ; he drank in the sweet-scented spring air at every breath, and saw the foliage begin to flush the woods, and the white blossoms of the dog-rose unfold in some shadowy vista,—the fruit trees and the orchards one beautiful sheet of tinted blossoms ; the lilacs and the snow-balls budding in the little door-yards of farm-houses, or village streets.

The weather, capricious as April always is, had rapidly changed towards evening. The clouds gathered chilly and cold overhead, the spring breeze now swept across the empty fields a bitter blast ; and a mist-like rain filled the air, penetrating every garment, and promising a long-settled storm.

Tom was on a lonely road, with only a few farm-houses, of the humblest description, scattered at long intervals. The twilight began to grow into settled darkness, and so did Tom's prospects. It was in vain that he buttoned up his jacket to the throat, turned up his coat collar, and drew his cap down over his eyes. The storm was pitiless and penetrating, and though he battled along bravely for a while, there was not even a barn in sight, as, at last, completely conquered by cold, hunger, and fatigue, he sat down on a great stone by the roadside, and wished himself back again at Rockville, or in New York, or any where but where he was, and what he was,—homeless and shelterless, without friends, or money, or food. What remained to him at that moment of all his courage and boasting, and cherished independence, but the supper of husks of the prodigal son !

How the work of months was done in that

miserable half hour, as with head bowed down on his knees he thought bitterly over his follies, and forced himself to see the uncertainty and falseness of his present position. Yet he could not go back,—he had himself shut the door of home as it were, and by the cheerful light of pictures that he drew, what he might have been to them all, a dutiful, respectful son, a loving brother, an educated, honorable man, he saw himself in the future, a wanderer, and an out-cast !

He raised his head at last, but there was nothing to cheer him in the mist and darkness his eyes tried in vain to penetrate. An indistinct glimmering of the white road, and the gray stone wall opposite ; a mass of dark outlines of the thick wood beyond ; no light, not even the “ little candle ” of a farmer’s kitchen to guide him, and the rain changing into a steady, persevering shower.

He caught another sound than the sighing of the trees, and the rushing of the rain presently, and his heart gave a great bound, as he made out the monotonous tramp of horses, toiling slowly along up the hill he had just left behind, and now down again faster, and cheered on by a man’s voice and the crack of a whip, as

they came nearer. He stood up and drew in his breath, as a shipwrecked man might have done at the cry of "a sail," and the man seeing the dark object by the road-side, called "hullo!" in a rough but not unkindly voice.

He did not seem to care much for the rain; why should he, in his thick homespun suit, and slouched hat that "shed it just like an *amber-ill*?" as he afterwards told Tom. Obediah Wise had never been in a hurry since he was born, and did not think it was worth while to begin now just for "a sprinkle." His horses were like their driver, neither spare nor stout, but in very good condition for all that, in their rusty old-fashioned harness.

Tom could not see this in the dark, but he made out that it was a box wagon by its length, and he would be thankful enough to have a seat on the load of boards, that clattered every step the horses took. "Hullo! whoa, old boy!" shouted Obediah again, coming to a full stop.

"Rather bad night, young man, and hard walkin', aint it now? Warnto ride?"

Never was invitation more gladly accepted. Tom climbed up over the muddy wheel, neither knowing nor caring for the effect the contact had on his already defaced clothes, handing the

bundle to Obediah, who deliberately drew it in.

“ ’Taint a very heavy load,” he said, critically, “ not much heft, nuther is mine. Maby you’d better set back on them boards there, and draw that are old coverlid up, you haint got no great coat I see, and it’s considerable of a sprinkle.”

Tom, who did not know the exact position of the “ old coverlid ” which “ was tuck along to kiver up old Bill, who had a stiff knee when he stood,” was assisted by Obediah, who turned around and leaned back, tucking him in as a mother would her baby.

“ Git up there,” he drawled out to his horses, when satisfied that all was right, and once more Tom was on the road ignorant of his destination, or his guide, and only thankful for some human companionship whatever it was, and the partial shelter.

“ Goin’ fur ? ” said Mr. Wise, presently, sitting sideways in the sociable manner common to country teamsters who know their road and like their company.

“ To Albany,” said Tom, at a venture, and thinking the man must be kind-hearted from the tone of his voice.

“ Want to know ! ” and a dead silence fol-

lowed, while Obediah desiring to entertain his passenger, fished in the void of his imagination for bait wherewith to gain further information.

"My name's Wise, Obediah Wise, Obed commonly for common," he said, after waiting in vain to hear any thing from his silent companion. "'Taint so long, and our folks allus did call me so. What's yourn?" asked he abruptly, disconcerting his new acquaintance much more than he had any idea of by the question.

But Tom parried it by another.

"Are you going home?" and there was a faltering in spite of himself on the last word, as he wished in his heart that he was.

"I *be*!" said Obed, complacently.

"Is it far?" asked Tom, making up his mind rapidly, that now was a chance for a night's lodging as well as a ride. He should not mind so much asking it of this good-natured man.

"Well, 'taint so far as it might be!" and the tone of the voice more than the words assured Tom that it was not a great many miles away. "I live out, you see," he added, and Tom's heart went down again; perhaps his new acquaintance had not the power, if the will, to shelter him.

“Taint so much livin’ out, nuther,” continued Obed ; “ I’m pretty much to hum, after all’s said and done.”

“ Is it a farm ? ” asked Tom, dreading, more than he ever had thought he could dread any thing, to come to the point.

“ Guess you’d think so ! Git up, now, Bill, maby you’ll git some oats when you git there,” and Obed’s own mouth tasted prospectively the cold corned beef and mug of cider that he knew awaited him.

The horses stepped on more briskly, trotting it could not be called, though Tom’s seat was far from luxurious, in the absence of springs ; but that was the least of the once fastidious young gentleman’s troubles.

“ The Squire and me gits in pritty good crops, I tell you now,” Obed broke silence with, presently.

“ Is he rich ? ” inquired Tom, whose part seemed to be only laconic catechism. The truth was, he was too wet, and hungry, and down-hearted to be very communicative.

“ Well, he ain’t so rich as Greasus—warn’t that his name ? I guess you know books, by the way you talk, sorter softly—nor he aint so poor as Poverty’s back door, nuther ! ”

with which indefinite information, Tom was fain to content himself, and trust to the chance of the Squire's hospitality.

"I'll tell you what he is, though," broke out Obed, warmly, "he's the furthestest seein', and the best dispositioned, and the right-down-cleverest man you ever *did* see."

Contented, if such a word could be named in his forlorn and miserable plight, to know that he probably would not be sent out into the storm again, Tom stretched himself out on the lumber, and made a pillow of his bundle.

Gradually the self-reproach, and anxiety, and homesick longing, faded into indistinct and broken recollection, and in spite of the uneasy motion, the pouring rain, and Obed's monotonous discourse to Bill, and his yoke-fellow, he fell asleep.

He was more exhausted than he knew of, by this three day's travel, and hard fare, so that his sleep was almost like lethargy. He did not rouse up, when Obed stopped the horses, and got out to unbar the great gate of a lane leading into the Squire's barn-yard; or when he drew up again in the full light of the kitchen window, to report himself, and request the girl "to hurry up them corn-beef, for he was as

hungry as a bear ;” nor when the Squire himself, lantern in hand, came out on the great stone step.

As the light fell upon the boy’s face, the hair wet, and clinging in masses to his white cheeks, blanched by fatigue and weariness, he was dreaming of his own home, with its brightness and warmth, of his mother’s tender loving care, and that his father had welcomed the prodigal home.

A strange, confused murmur of voices roused him at last, and rising on his elbow with difficulty, stiff and bewildered, he found himself at the door of Uncle Peter’s homestead, and face to face with his own father !

CHAPTER XVI.

A HARD LESSON.

“Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbor’s house, lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee.”

PROVERBS.

To use a homely phrase, Josephine “knew better” than to accept Mrs. Jones’s invitation, which was made for an indefinite length of time.

“For ever,” Clementina said—and why not, for she was an only daughter, and had things pretty much her own way. When the end of the term came, and Josephine, who had fretted too much to learn any thing the last five or six weeks, departed under the escort of Mr. Jones, her leave-taking was very unsatisfactory. Miss Anthon, who was not indulgent naturally, was displeased with her for not exerting herself still more than ever to improve advantages she might never have again. The girls did not make “half as much fuss over her as they used to,”

and, she was sure, "talked about her, behind her back." Miss Fanshaw's manner certainly was cold, but Josephine did her injustice when she attributed it to the affair of the ring, and that she was going away without replacing it. Marianne had entirely forgotten it, a very trifling loss to her; but she was disappointed in her little friend, and thought her decision showed little love for her mother, and brothers and sisters. To Marianne, this home love, which Josephine so cast away, would have been the dearest thing on earth; but as many have found in sorrow later in life, it is one of those daily blessings little appreciated until it is denied to us.

Josephine had deliberately taken the wrong path, and she herself was to blame, that she found more thorns than roses.

At first it was all very pleasant; Mrs. Jones patted and humored both the children, took them every where with her, and was particularly fond of introducing "Miss Bleeker, my daughter's friend," to her visitors. They were not to know it was the "Bleeker" who had failed in the spring; there were many Bleekers in New York, and none of the Jones's circle visited them. They were generally fashionable people, who looked down on the Jones's con-

nection, as they in turn considered themselves better than the Smiths.

They lived in a large, modern house, much handsomer, and more showily furnished than Mr. Bleeker's had been ; with a full regiment of servants, so that Clementina "need not turn her hand over, if she did not choose," as her mother often said before her. Of course, Clementina did *not* choose, and this easy life suited Josephine remarkably well, also.

There was an absence of refinement both in the family and their manner of living, to which Josephine had always been accustomed at home, with all Mrs. Bleeker's plain and economical ways. Mr. Jones laughed loud and long at his own jokes, and Mrs. Jones did not always use good grammar. Neither was Clementina as respectful to her parents as Josephine had been taught was right and lady-like. But she tried not to see these things, for if there was less refinement, there was less restraint ; she had no one to tell her even to practise, if she did not care to. The regular habits which she had been accustomed to at home and at school, were sadly broken in upon. The little girls rose when they liked, and had a hot breakfast when it suited them to come down.

Her reading and her prayers were first put off, then missed, then omitted altogether. There was not a Bible in the house, except the large, elegantly bound quarto in the parlor, and the one Clementina had used at school; no family prayers—no mention of our daily dependence on the Father from whom came all the good and abundant gifts which they enjoyed through the week; and on Sunday, Mrs. Jones went to morning service, only, dressed in the extreme of fashion, and came home to comment on the bonnets and mantillas of the congregation, instead of the sermon. Perhaps she never heard it, for many people have a remarkable talent for shutting their ears in church, while their eyes and thoughts are very busy.

Josephine's first real trouble was about her wardrobe. Every body knows how shabby and old-fashioned "last summer's dresses" always look, when brought into comparison with the bright colors, and recent shapes of winter or spring.

Mrs. Bleeker had sent a trunk containing Josephine's to Mrs. Jones, before she went into the country, and the young girl, recollecting how becoming her pink lawn had been, and how prettily her striped barège was made, had

no misgivings on the score of appearances, until the first hot days of June made a lighter toilette than the gray cashmere, and bright palm-leaf shawl, admirable. Mrs. Bleeker had taken her last year's straw bonnet for Olive, and sent Josephine a new one, plain, but sufficiently good to be presentable ; the shape and blue ribbons were becoming, though the straw was coarse.

The little girls were by themselves, in Clementina's large, luxurious chamber, dressing to go out with Mrs. Jones.

"What are *you* going to wear?" asked Clem, laying out a new tissue, with a very approving glance, upon the handsome French bed.

"My cashmere, I guess," said Josephine, admiring the broad, smooth braid that grew under her quick fingers. She stood before a glass that gave back her figure at full length.

"That everlasting cashmere ! oh, don't—do put on a summer dress."

"Well, if you think it's warm enough ; mamma was always very particular about our not changing too early ; I suppose my lawn will want to be done up, but I can put on my *barège*."

Josephine hunted up the key, from a very disorderly drawer, and opened the trunk. There were linen under-clothes first, for Mrs. Bleeker was always more particular about under than outer garments, which Mrs. Jones was not. Then came the dresses.

The pink lawn had a wonderfully faded look, beside Clementina's bright painted tissue, with its gauze ribbon trimming ; the black silk mantle, trimmed with folds, which she thought the height of elegance last summer, was very old-fashioned, now that every body wore fringe, or ruffles ; and the barège dress was short-waisted, as indeed all the dresses were, and came almost up to her knees. Josephine could have cried with vexation, as she unfolded and shook out one article of dress after the other. Mrs. Jones thought so much of appearances, and these things, though they might be made comfortable by altering, and were good enough for a child of her age, would never be presentable by the side of the gay toilettes of mother and daughter.

Then she looked so like a fright, and Josephine's vanity was even stronger than her foolish pride. In vain she pulled down the waist, and twitched at the sleeves of the refractory barège. It would not meet on the shoulders, or at the

waist. It was too high in the neck, too short in the skirt, but *that* at least she could remedy, for it was tucked almost to the waist.

Josephine snatched up the scissors and ripped out a tuck. Alas! the barège had faded, and with all the pressing in the world it would always show. Mrs. Jones found her crying when she came back with Clementina, who had gone to her mother's room, just as the research commenced. She was kind-hearted in the main, and it worried her to see any one in trouble, so she told Josephine that the seamstress should alter her dresses, and that the lawn could have a belt set in, which would never show with a sash, showing such a readiness at alteration, that Josephine innocently wondered if Mrs. Jones had had a new outfit every spring, all her life, herself; but she could not help a shabby, mortified feeling, as she caught sight of herself in the little mirror of the ferry-boat, sitting between Mrs. Jones and her daughter.

"Never mind," said Clementina, good-naturedly, as she saw the glance and its effect; "you do not look so *very* warm, and that bonnet is sweet, pretty, and will do very nicely until you have a dress hat next month."

"But I'm not going to have a dress bonnet,"

said Josephine, sullenly, feeling that moment cross with herself and all the world.

“Not going to have a dress hat !” said Clementina, opening her blue eyes wider than ever. “Ma, Josephine says she’s not going to have one, after all. Why, we were going to *Malherbe’s* to look for one this afternoon.”

“Oh yes, she will,” said Mrs. Jones, in a matter-of-course way. “Likely enough her ma has forgot about it.”

“Likely enough !” repeated Josephine, sneeringly, to herself. “My ma speaks good English, any way, if she don’t wear French bonnets !”

Such an impertinent, ill-bred thought of a person so much older than herself, and whose hospitality she enjoyed, would not have entered Josephine’s mind six months before, or, at any rate, been allowed to stay there. So true is the copy she had often written, that evil communications corrupt good manners, without knowing, it is true, that the warning came from Marianne’s book of rules.

The show-room was a perfect flutter of lace, and flowers, and ribbons ; Mademoiselle Alice only too attentive. Bonnets, so light and transparent that you scarcely felt their weight more

than a garland in your hand, were pressed upon their attention. Clementina fixed upon a straw-colored crape, with violets inside and out, although her mother and Mademoiselle both told her it was too old for her,—and she insisted on Josephine's trying on a pale green crape, with a single spray of sweet briar, which was really very simple and becoming.

Josephine had never seen herself look so well. The blonde cap, and tiny butterfly bows, suited her face, and the whole thing was so stylish and striking.

“Aunt Lucy—Mrs. Hamilton had one very much like it last season,” she said to Clementina, for Josephine was very fond of quoting her fashionable relations, since she found it gave her so much consequence in the eyes of Mrs. Jones.

The remark had a visible effect on Mademoiselle, who had not before thought it advisable to waste much attention on the plainly-dressed child.

“Ah! Madame Hamilton! She does live in Gramercy Park!” said Madame Malherbe, herself, turning around suddenly. “The very hat itself was sent from us—you remember Madame Hamilton's green hat, Mademoiselle Alice? She has white this season, with blonde

and crape flowers. She is very stylish, Madame Hamilton,—she is gone to Newport.”

Josephine knew this, for she had taken it upon herself to call in Gramercy Park, the first week of her stay in Brooklyn. It was very delightful to have Madame leave other customers, and overlook Clementina altogether, to wait on her.

“Mademoiselle wishes a crape hat; Mademoiselle has—*ex-cellent-taste*,” said the quick Frenchwoman. “It is very becoming; shall I send it to Madame’s address?”

“Oh, no!” said Josephine, startled; for she had noticed the price, eight dollars, pinned on one of the strings; but for that matter she could not have afforded two.

“You might as well, Josephine,” said Mrs. Jones, also flattered at Madame’s attention, when so many well-dressed ladies were in the room. She heard one of them say—“Mrs. Hamilton’s niece,” and direct the attention of her companion towards them.

“You can have it charged with Clementina’s,” she whispered; “never mind—every body’s looking at you.”

Josephine hesitated, and blushed before Madame’s keen black eyes, as if she could read

her poverty in this indecision. "Madame Hamilton's niece" could not say she had no money, though an unknown little girl in a coarse straw might have summoned courage for such a confession.

"Yes, you may send it home ;" said Mrs. Jones, aloud ; "she could not suit herself better," and Josephine, forgetting how she had blamed Tom for this very thing, and disobeying her mother's positive injunctions, suffered it to be laid aside with her name attached, saying to herself, "it was all Mrs. Jones—she could not help it," though she knew in her heart that she might, had she the courage.

The bonnet came home, and Josephine, stifling all uncomfortable reflections, wore it the next Sunday ; though she was obliged to own to herself, that it did not look very suitable with the somewhat defaced mantle and altered dress. Clementina's quick eyes saw it, too, and the next time they were shopping, she persuaded her mother to get a mantilla like her own, and a French muslin, which the seamstress made up, though Josephine remonstrated faintly, and felt very guilty every time she wore this elegant outfit.

Mrs. Bleeker had not thought it necessary

to write to Mrs. Jones of the charge she had so positively given Josephine, and Clementina said, "Oh, Mrs. Bleeker won't mind," and Mrs. Jones really thought so ; and that, so far from minding, she ought to be very much obliged to her for taking the trouble of seeing to her daughter's outfit. She proposed several other additions to it, but now that she had one nice suit, her young visitor had the grace to decline them positively.

Josephine had not been at peace with herself for a long time, and her once amiable disposition changed into fretful irritability, as her secret disquiet increased. She could not always stifle thought, and she was not so blind, that she did not see that her position with the family gradually altered. Mr. Jones was more nearly the same than any one, but he had never been much of a favorite with her. Mrs. Jones, who was not above the vulgar fashion of "hinting," inquired "what her ma said," every time she had a letter from home, evidently thinking it strange no remittances arrived, and that nothing was ever mentioned of Josephine's return home. Clementina, notwithstanding their eternal friendship, had formed a desperate intimacy with two very showy sisters, older than herself, who always took occasion to make themselves very disagree-

able to Josephine. She had never before been accustomed to such rich, high-seasoned, and often unsuitable dishes, as were constantly served at the table, and to which the girls were helped without question. All these things had brought back her nervous headaches more violently and frequently than ever, and home-sickness, in its full meaning, always came with the attack.

"Pa talks of going to Niagara," said Clementina to her one morning, when she had been forced to lie down immediately after breakfast.

"Does he?" she answered, absently, only wishing Clementina would get through opening drawers, and banging closet doors to, as she proposed to go out. She often went without Josephine nowadays, and left her alone for hours together, without even inviting her to join them sometimes, if the Miss Slopers were to be her companions.

The intended journey, or that she could be in any way affected by it, passed out of her mind again, as Clementina left the room. She forced herself to get up and close the inner shutters, for she did not like to ask the servants to do any thing for her lately, they were so impertinent. It made the room quite dark, but warm and close, so she got up again and opened the door

into a little dressing-room where the seamstress usually sat.

She was almost too miserable to think, as she lay down again, covering her eyes with her hands, and pressing her throbbing temples into the pillow ; but she could not get asleep, try as she would, and a great longing to see the dear home faces, no matter how plain the home might be, or how hard her share of its duties might prove, filled her mind. But then those dreadful debts, she must confess those, if she wrote to be sent for, and ask for the money to pay them with, and she had so little moral courage remaining ; it would be easy to confess her error, and return to her duty, but for them,—far easier than to lead this hollow, self-tormenting life.

She heard the seamstress come into the sewing room while she was thinking this, and presently the chambermaid joined her, and sat down for a regular gossip. At first she only wished they would not talk so loud, or would go somewhere else, and then she heard Jane, the chambermaid, say,

“I wouldn’t stay where I warn’t wanted, poor as I be.”

“Nor I,” answered the seamstress. “You’re sure she isn’t in there, Jane ?”

“La, no,” said the girl, “she and Clementina’s off flourishin’ somewhere ; I heard ’em go right after breakfast. They’re all tired of her, any body could see that with half an eye ; though how *Miss Jones* came to take up with her, and ask her here in the first place, *I* can’t see ; after her father’d failed, and all.”

“I suppose they thought her ma’d clothe her, any way, and not let it *all* come on *Miss Jones*. I didn’t engage to sew for any body, when I came here ; I can tell *Miss Jones* that, if she tries it again.”

“Haint she ever given you any thing ? ” inquired Jane.

“Not the first thing ; and I altered every one of them frocks, and made that muslin.”

“I should think she’d feel real mean, wearing that every time she went out, and our Clementina dressing so handsome. But la, Ann, some folks is so *callus* ! She never handed over the first thing to me, neither,—I never lived nowhere before, that the visitors didn’t make handsome presents, did you ? What’ll she do when they’re gone to Niagara, I wonder ; *Miss Jones* means to ask her to-night if her ma’s goin’ to let her go along. She aint a-goin’ to stay here to be waited on, I’ll be bound. *Miss*

Jones don't know what to make of their not sendin' no money ; I heard her tell Clementina so, last night."

"What did *she* say !"

"Oh, la ! she's right up an' down, Clementina is ; she said right out, how poor they was now, and *Miss* Jones said, then her ma orter know better than to let her come. Gracious ! how the wind banged that door to !"

But it was not the wind ; Josephine had heard all, and a great deal more than she wished to. At first she could not realize that she was the object of such insulting comment ; but the truth, cutting as it was to come through such a channel, had gone home, and her real position, when even the servants could talk over her poverty, and blame her mother, forced itself upon her.

She wrote to her mother a humble, tear-blistered confession, before the sting of the insult ceased to goad her, and stealing out of the house, carried it herself to the post-office. Oh, how long the week seemed before an answer could possibly come ; and when it did arrive, her hands trembled so that a bank bill it enclosed fell on the floor as she opened it. She was alone, fortunately, and she did not stoop to

pick it up, in her eagerness to know her sentence at once.

“My own dear child,” wrote Mrs. Bleeker, “I will not add to your trouble by any reproaches, for I see you have already suffered a hard punishment. Such dependence is more bitter than any spoken reproof, and your own self-reproach, particularly when you come to understand our position at home, how plainly we live, how frugal we are forced to be, until your father’s affairs are entirely settled, is punishment enough. He hopes yet to pay off every dollar, and we all work together towards it; but the amount of your various bills comes to very nearly the sum that I have saved from the clothes of Olive and the children. I have not had so much as a new bonnet this year.

“I am sorry I cannot send it to you now. Your father will have nothing of his own before the crops are disposed of; and, kind as Uncle Peter is, I should not like to ask a loan from him. You know it is against my principles. Your journey will cost all that I can spare at present, for, of course, you will come to us immediately, and we will make you very welcome in our new home. Assure Mrs. Jones that the amount will be remitted to her at the earliest

possibility. This is the last mortification, I hope, which you will have to undergo, in connection with this unfortunate visit.

“I am sorry I did not know about the ring before. Tom owned to his father that he had borrowed all your allowance, and now sends you five dollars that he has earned himself this summer,—I will leave him to tell you how. But as you will probably need it all just now, I send you one of my own rings for Miss Fanshaw, by Mr. Lane, who will bring you home. He is one of our country neighbors, plain, but obliging, and will probably be in town the day after you receive this. Do not forget to thank Miss Fanshaw for all her kind care and advice to my wayward daughter.

“Dear child ! I could have told you how all this would end from the beginning, but you would not have believed me, or been contented and satisfied if I had acted upon my own judgment, and declined the visit for you. But do not think it was unkind, this is sometimes Our Father’s way—‘He suffers us to fall into temptation’—that the experience bought so dearly, may make us wise in due time.”

Clementina’s ardor revived a little, when she

found Josephine was really going, but on the whole, she felt it a relief as well as Mrs. Jones ; and Josephine could but see that it was so. She did not propose a correspondence, though their friendship was to be so eternal, according to the purple morocco album. The Miss Slopers had it now, and she was to go to school with them in the autumn at Madame Chegary's, their mother having persuaded Mrs. Jones that Rockville was "entirely behind the age."

Josephine had the satisfaction of making Ann and Jane each a handsome present the day before she left, much to the astonishment of these young women, who immediately began to grow complimentary, and make extraordinary offers of unnecessary assistance, which were at once declined.

When her trunk was fairly in the hall, and Josephine stood at the parlor window, watching for Mr. Lane and his cab, she could not repress a few tears of mortification, at the end of a visit which had promised so much pleasure. She drew her veil down over her face to hide them, and wished she could love Clementina as she had done at Rockville, or that she could think Mrs. Jones, who was urging her to "come again soon," sincere. It was her first lesson in

worldliness, and it robbed her of so much of childhood's faith, life's first treasure.

But Marianne was unchanged,—Marianne, who was stopping at a hotel in the city, on a long summer tour with her father. She was to go to see her on her way to the cars, and Mr. Lane very kindly put himself out of the way to accompany her there, though Clementina had known she wanted to go for a week, and had not offered to help her.

Marianne flew down to the carriage, looking lovelier than ever, in a pretty plaid silk, and with not so much as a velvet bow in her abundant hair. She brought her father with her, who seemed so proud and fond, that it was a pleasure to see them together; and said, the ring which Josephine offered, blushing, was "lovely, only it was a shame to keep it, a beautiful emerald for her worthless little pearls."

"I will, though, and wear it as a keepsake from you, darling, and I hope to see your mother, and thank her one of these days. I may pay Joe a visit, mayn't I, papa?"

Mr. Fanshaw smiled, and said "when he could spare her," and bowed and spoke very politely to Mr. Lane, who was a plain farmer, with no pretence at all, and a little awkward

and embarrassed in manner. Clementina and her mother had ridiculed him, but Mr. Fanshaw was a gentleman in every sense of the word.

Marianne, on the other side of the carriage, stood with her hand on the open door. "I wish I could see you longer, dear Joe, and make you understand how much I really loved you all the time, only it grieved me to see you neglecting every thing so, and deciding against your own conscience, as I knew you did. Write to me very often, and long, honest letters, there's a dear child."

"We must not make Mr. Lane too late for the cars," said Mr. Fanshaw, stepping back on the pavement. "I'm glad to have met you, Miss Josephine, and give my kindest regards to your father, he will remember me."

So the carriage drove off, with another wave of the hand from Marianne, and Josephine's face, like her thoughts, was "set towards home."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE HOMESTEAD.

"Owe no man any thing, but to love one another."—ROMANS.

"Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness."
ECCLESIASTES.

THERE was the usual amount of bustle the next afternoon, at the Croton depot. It was not a very important station, but the lookers on, and idlers of the village, had collected to see the train come in. The baggage-master walked up and down the platform, with an important air, and a few passengers were waiting to take the up train.

Apart from the rest of the vehicles in waiting, stood an old-fashioned, yellow wagon, with two seats; and the horse, in harness by no means bright or new, had bent down to crop the dusty grass as well as he could, which his city brethren would have disdained to do. But

there was no false pride in our old acquaintance, "Bill," to keep him from gathering an honest mouthful as he could, and Olly, who now held the reins, was too busy in watching for the cars, to mind what the horse was about, so he did not run away with her.

"Here it comes," shouted Tom, appearing on the platform; don't be afraid, Olly, he won't even prick up his ears. "Here they are," and the long rumbling train shot forward in a cloud of dust, then slackened its pace, and finally concluded to stand still, and let the passengers alight.

"Oh, I'm afraid she has not come," said Olly, fairly trembling with eagerness, to Katie, clinging on the back seat, and at that moment only afraid of old Bill.

"Yes, there she is—no, it is not—yes, it is, Tom's found her. Oh, how she's grown, I wonder if she'll know us, Katie. Joe—dear Joe! and unmindful of Katie's terror at being thus suddenly promoted as charioteer, Olive climbed down from the yellow wagon, and hurried to squeeze Josephine's hand, and carry her traveling bag for her.

In spite of her hard lessons, of her good sense, and all her good resolutions, Josephine in-

instinctively drew back, and felt a momentary chill, at Olive in her gingham sun-bonnet, and Katie clinging so helplessly to the back of the yellow wagon. She had tried to fancy the change, but she could not make it as great as it really was, until she saw Tom's hard, brown hands, and palm-leaf hat, the girls in their sun-bonnets, and chintz dresses, and above all, "that deplorable wagon," as she mentally styled the vehicle that had taken Uncle Peter to "meeting," for many a year.

But she made a great effort to overcome what she knew to be an unworthy feeling, and stooping down, kissed Olive's glowing eager face affectionately, before she despatched her to Katie's relief, and helped Tom identify her trunk in the promiscuous pile of baggage.

"Oh, wait for the porter, don't try to lift it yourself," she called out, as Tom prepared to lift it into the front of the wagon.

"Poh—poh, stand around, you don't know how strong I've grown, look at that arm, will you?" said Tom, though fortunately for his boasted strength, a porter did appear at that instant.

"Where shall I sit?" asked Josephine,

hesitating a little before she essayed to mount into the antique conveyance.

"On the first seat by me—I have *acres* to talk about."

"No, with us," begged Katie, "Olly and me ; I can make myself ever so little, and there's the trunk in front."

It was pleasant to be really cared for, and quarrelled over, after so long a stay where "she was not wanted." "But I think I had better sit by Tom."

"Of course," said Tom, grandly. "There's room enough to put the trunk under the seat. Not fine, but comfortable, Joe. I suppose it does look shabby, it did to me at first, but I was glad enough to ride after old 'Bill,' the first night I made his acquaintance."

"You never told me how it was all settled," said Joe, as the trunk was finally disposed of, and the wagon moved on, Olive still holding the carpet bag, though Katie had claimed the veil.

"Oh, it was too long a story, and I did not particularly care to be reminded of it at first ; I don't care so much now—steady, Bill ! You need not mind him though, Joe ; he's like Obed, would 'rather die than run,' any day."

“Who’s Obed?”

“Only think, sister don’t know who Obed is!” said Katie, astonished at such ignorance.

“Why, Uncle Peter’s man, that picked me up that night. You ought to have seen father! but Uncle Peter was on the spot, mother and the children were tired out, and gone to bed; the boxes were not even unpacked.”

“I know,” said Joe, “go on,—about Uncle Peter.”

“Oh, well, he took the case in hand, and said when a fellow had done wrong, and was sorry, there was nothing like giving him a fair chance to mend; but I don’t think I *was* fairly sorry before I saw how mother felt about it. I say ‘mother’ now, almost always, I like it better. Mother and I are great friends!”

“And father and Olly!” added Katie, who had lost the whole of the first part of Tom’s communication.

“Father’s never cross now,” said Olive, sedately, “but I hope you won’t mind, Josephine.”

“Mind what, Humpty Dumpty?” said Joe, good-naturedly.

“Oh, a great many things,” concluded Olive, evasively.

"Such as—" said Tom, cutting off a dusty, road-side thistle with his whip.

"There's only Susan, you know, now, and old Mrs. Wise!"

"Who is she?"

"Sister don't know *any thing*," said Katie, again amazed.

"Obed's mother," explained Olive, "but Obed milks, and gets the wood, and all that."

"What do you do, Olive?"

"Oh, I sew, and study!"

"Study!" said Josephine. "I did not know there was a school within ten miles."

"Yes there is! and *I* go; only think of that! and Miss Ann says you—"

"Hush, Katie," cautioned Olive.

"What does Miss Ann say—who is she? what does she know about me?" inquired Josephine, curiously.

"Out with it, little one," said Tom.

"She says Josephine don't like her very much, but I told her I did not care, I loved her dearly, and so did mother."

"Who is it, Olive?" said Josephine, quite mystified.

"Our teacher, Miss Ann Brown; mother thinks a great deal of her."

"*She* doesn't visit at *our* house!" said Josephine, forgetful for a moment of all that had occurred since she left home.

"Why not? she staid with us when she first came, before Aunt Lucy did; oh, you did not know she was there, did you?"

"Aunt Lucy!" wonders will never cease, thought Josephine. "What brought her up here—she hates the country."

"S—h," said Tom, warningly. "I'll tell you when they're not listening."

"She isn't pretty any more," sighed Katie; "and so cross! I really believe she thinks us children always in the way!"

"I shouldn't wonder if you were, most of the time," said Tom, aloud; and then, in an undertone,—*"Uncle Hamilton's gone off with some money belonging to the Bank, and there's a terrible time—Aunt Lucy had nowhere else to go; I heard father tell mother it was partly her extravagance made him do so."*

Josephine's face grew troubled; she had greatly admired her aunt, and copied her manner as far as she could, at such a distance. "Poor Aunt Lucy," she said.

"Mother said——" began Olive.

"About our coming for Joe?" interrupted Katie.

"Yes, that *we* had better come, and you could hear all the news from us. But there's one thing,"—and Olive returned to her secret disquiet.

"You might as well let me hear it all first as last," said Josephine.

"We have to sleep in the garret chamber," said Olive, with a great effort—"you and I, since Aunt Lucy came."

"Horrors!" ejaculated Joe, quite off her guard, and with a sudden recollection of Clementina's large airy room.

"I wish *I* could sleep there," said Katie; "it's so funny—but mother won't let me."

"It's not so *very bad*," said Olive, humbly. She had been trying all along to communicate this dreadful intelligence cautiously, and had blundered, after all.

Josephine said nothing.

"Mother fixed it up beautifully," urged poor Olive, "and Uncle Peter says it's my bower."

"A bower in a garret!" thought Josephine, contemptuously.

“ Oh, Joe ! how you *will* like Uncle Peter ! ” said Tom, opportunely, “ won’t she, Olive ? ”

“ Yes, indeed,” said Olive, relieved at finding the worst was really over. “ He lets us children do any thing ; and Mrs. Wise said, only this morning, that Squire Van Ranseller was like another person since we came.”

It was indeed a pleasant change to the hale, kindly old man, to hear the patter of those little feet, and the prattle of those childish voices, echoing through the solitary house, now open, and “ swept and garnished ” every where. It was like a new life ; and he would have been only too indulgent, if Mrs. Bleeker had not set her bounds, and adhered to them rigidly. Her presence alone was a blessing to him—knowing that she cared for his comfort, and felt that she could never be grateful enough to the only father she had ever known. It was a great pleasure to see her husband understand and appreciate his open, honest nature so fully ; and to see with what interest the once world-worn man took the kindly teaching of the woods and fields, seed-time and harvest, to his heart.

“ It is almost time for the children,” Mrs. Bleeker said to him, coming out upon the shady “ stoop,” where he was romping with Nannie.

“Yes, I suppose it is. Only see, Kate—she walked from *there*—to *there*,—holding on by the rails.”

“Is it possible !” said Mrs. Bleeker, holding up her hands in feigned astonishment.

“And she can say ‘cat’ quite distinctly. Say ‘cat’ for mamma, Nannie—say *cat*, as you did for papa, just now.”

“Yat !” lisped baby, holding by the railing tightly with both hands, and looking up into her mother’s face to hear her accomplishments admired.

“Oh, you darling !” cried papa, catching the round, dimpled baby up in a transport, and rewarding her with a toss that sent her head only too near the sloping roof.

“My dear Richard,” said Mrs. Bleeker, with great gravity, “it is a singular fact, that all your children have learned to walk and talk pretty much in the same way, only you never had time to discover it.” Baby’s mamma looked so bright and cheerful, so like the Kate Van Ranseller that Mr. Bleeker had wooed and won, at that moment, that she came in for a share of the kisses that were lavished on the little one.

“Uncle Peter has gone down the lane to

meet them,—how proud he is of Tom,” she said, as soon as she could speak.

“ Yes, Tom is doing remarkably well,” and Mr. Bleeker nodded complacently. “ I have no fault to find with Tom, nowadays. I wish they would come, I begin to feel as hungry as possible.”

“ Do you remember how the tea-table used to wait, once upon a time, and that you had no appetite for so long ? Tell me, Richard, do you feel quite satisfied here ? ”

“ More than satisfied,—only too thankful to you for bringing it about,—*debt is a hard bondage*, Kate.”

Mrs. Bleeker put her arm within her husband's, and stood looking out upon the old lawn with a silent thanksgiving. The shadows of the elm trees played softly upon the grass, the warm summer sun lighted up the old-fashioned garden, with its tall clumps of holly-hocks, and trim borders of box ; the air was full of fragrance, and farther on the barns, new and old, told of an abundant harvest from the wide fields ; while the kine came up the shaded lane, to the slow tinkle of their leader's bell. It was a pure pastoral poem in her eyes ; this home of her

childhood, seen under all these pleasant influences.

Katie's shout of "get in, Uncle Peter," was heard from the foot of the lane. Katie, who claimed to be Uncle Peter's favorite, was not going to have him walking up the lane alone, so she compromised matters, by suffering herself to be lifted out, and walking up with him.

Josephine's heart beat very quick and fast, as she found herself really driving up to the "stoop," as Uncle Peter, true to his Dutch descent, always called the wide porch ; she was in a tumult of feeling, shame, gladness, and thankfulness to be at home again, all mingled.

Her father lifted her out, and in another minute she stood encircled by her mother's arms, with the kiss of welcome and forgiveness on her forehead. "We are glad to have you with us again," said Mrs. Bleeker, as Josephine stooped down over Nannie, to hide her quivering lips.

"Don't forget me, Joe," said her papa behind her, and as Peter, with Lucy behind him, came racing through the hall, the family party was complete.

There was a great deal to be done in the way of sight-seeing, and before her bonnet was

fairly untied, Josephine, the guest of the family, was called all ways at once.

“Come and see my garden first,” said Tom, “that’s the way I made the five dollars ; Obed took my things to market for me.”

“I’m going to feed my chickens,” said Olive, “you are to have them now if you like, mother pays me for my eggs. I’m so glad my bantams are out, just like the dearest little canary birds ; they are my own. Come”—

“Take me,” sued Lucy, who had not let go Josephine’s hand since she came.

“Yat—tat,” shouted Nannie, feeling very much neglected in all the din.

Josephine decided to accept Tom’s invitation, as she could not do every thing at once, and she wanted to ask more about Mrs. Hamilton, who was not yet visible.

“I was up every morning before five,” said Tom, as they reached his boundary land, “and did it all myself, with Obed’s showing ; you must go to the barn and see Obed, he’s worth knowing, I tell you. How do you like Uncle Peter ?”

“He is a dear old man, he’s most like mother, isn’t he, Tom ; I feel so sorry about laughing at him.”

“They don’t *look* much alike, but their ways

are. It was Uncle Peter put this into my head, and I shall almost have enough to pay off all I owe, with my potatoes, and all. For all Uncle Peter's so good, he told father not to pay it for me ; he said when people owed him, and did not have any money, he let them work it out, and they felt better satisfied in the end, and remembered it longer."

"What has become of Charlie Spear ?" asked Josephine, reminded of him by this allusion to Rockville doings.

"He's made off with himself somewhere ; his father did not do as ours did, but gave him an awful caning, old as he is, when he found out about things, and the boys say he's gone to California ; I don't believe any body knows, though, and Mrs. Spear—you know, we saw her that day ; she's almost distracted. Just look at these winter squashes ! every one is good as a shilling, Obed says !"

"But does Ann, Miss Brown, really come here ?" said Josephine, who could appreciate flowers, but had yet to cultivate a taste for vegetable gardening.

"Yes, indeed, mother thinks the world of her, Olive improves so fast ; you did not know I am to read Latin with her this winter, did you ?

Mother says it relieves her mind of the only trouble she had about coming here ; schools for us—there was none in her day, when she and Aunt Lucy went to Albany. Here comes Olive after us.”

Olive, who could not overcome a little awe of Josephine, as the eldest sister, and withal, such a stylish young lady, had come to summon them to tea.

It was a cheerful, social meal, none of the little ones being excluded from the table, under the new order of things. Uncle Peter, who had resigned his place to Mr. Bleeker, sat in their midst, and asked a blessing, with his silvery head reverently bowed, and his thin hands clasped before him ; and the wayward Josephine felt, for the first time in her life, how good and pleasant a thing it was, to dwell together in unity.

There came to be more of the true beauty and poetry of life to her, in the humble little chamber, where she slept that night, than she ever would have known in the gay and busy world. Household love, and household virtues, grew apace in the young girl's heart.

“Do you know,” said Olive, one night, as they read their chapter there together, “I

think this is like *you* are now, Josephine,” and there was no flattery in the sincere, loving child.

Josephine stooped down over her shoulder, and read :—“The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.”

THE END.





